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MR. FRANCIS NEWNES

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BY

C. C. MARTINDALE

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MEDICO DILECTO

MY DEAR DR. COUNSELL,

On the day which has brought the news of a great sorrow for us to share, I have decided to offer you this continuation of *Jock*. No one can doubt but that your help meant everything to Father Plater during this difficult year, and I can never feel thankful enough for having so obstinately urged you to take the holiday you so much needed, by way of escorting him to Malta. That journey has left you with many memories besides its anxious ones, and you witnessed the quite extraordinary affection and enthusiasm which seemed to spring up wherever he passed. *Pertransiit benefaciendo.*

On the way back you say you had *Jock* for travelling companion; you must detect his influence throughout this second volume, though I seldom name it.

Perhaps you will say that *Mr. Francis Newnes* has caused me to fall heavily between two stools, and that it is neither a proper instruction book, nor, assuredly, a craftsmanlike story. Well, the two stools were there; but, from the start, I decided not even to try to sit on either of them. I assumed deliberately a safe and humble position on the floor between them. I have meant to emphasize some four points which were (naturally) not much insisted on in *Jock*, though even there you will find them sticking out undisguised; and I have wanted to live a little longer in the company (for as such I feel it) of people whom I loved. Hence the story comes down, I own, with a thud on to the heavy fields of " instruction " at least four times; and here and there the path across that plain

may seem to become invisible. Still, I trust that it remains, and may be tracked by an observant eye.

I know, anyhow, that you won't just condemn it, spiritually, as vulgarized "propaganda," nor artistically, as a novel "with a purpose." The Creator had a purpose in His great Poem; I have no wish to write just novels; but neither do I fear to try to incarnate, in a measure, God's Catholic Truth.

So accept it, together with my personal gratitude and affection.

C. C. MARTINDALE.

CAMPION HALL,
January 24-25, 1921.

P.S.—One or two paragraphs in Chapter III. I have not altered. When I read the MS. to Father Plater, he laughed over them, and would not have wished them changed.

MR. FRANCIS NEWNES

Chapter I

"AND with that," said Mrs. Bolton, severely, "I puts my fork down; and when I puts down my fork, they knows what *that* means."

She saw I was about to speak, and hastily proceeded. "What I've had to put up with time an' time again, none knows better than your Reverence. Never a word said I when that Miss Jenkins as you recommended left her shoe-cream in a plate by the fender an' your Reverence's dog rolled in it; an' a nice mess the carpet would be in this very minute 'ad I not brought up the parlour rug as was made by St. Aloysius's Widows an' put it over the place as you can see with your own eyes, though *not* suitable to a single bed-an'-sitting room I *will* say. And never a word says I when the theatrical young lady stood 'er stout bottles all of a row on the mantel an' started to shoot at them with her—elastics," said Mrs. Bolton, overcome with a sudden but tremendous sense of decorum, "knowin' as 'ow you wanted to get her for the Stage Guild an' trusting it would teach 'er better. An' there's much more as I've sat down under and said no word, but offer a candle regular to St. Joseph as 'ow 'e would bless the lodgers bein' the Head of families an' Patriarch of 'omes, as Father O'Reilly said this very month of March. But when this Miss Silver, though *not* your Reverence's recommendation an' never would I suggest it, she marches into me own room, an' me at supper an' tired out, with the 'Oly Father in 'er 'ands as Miss Barbara give me, with the war on an' all, an' says she won't 'ave 'im hanging in 'er room—well, I puts me fork down, an' the last straw it was, I *will* say."

"But is she a violent anti-Catholic, or what?"

Mrs. Bolton assumed a shrill voice, and clipped her words.

"'Of course, my dear Mrs. Bolton,' sez she, smilin' vinegar at me, 'it's not for myself I mind, an' the pore dear Roman Catholics

are welcome to their Pope whatever he may mean to them——' But at that I ups an' ' Pore they may be,' says I, ' but dear I am not, Miss, nor will you find me so if so be as you speak against the 'Oly Father, an' as for what he may mean to us, *'is* meaning's clear an' definite enough, an' not the same as *some*,' I says with a significant nod an' keeping me dignity; ' though I'm not denyin',' I says with a smile, not wishin' to quarrel nor go against due charity, ' though not denyin' you might lose your way in his holy Palace of the Vatican, it havin' one thousand an' eight hundred rooms (as your Reverence told me yourself) an' never a 'ousemaid in it.' "

" What did she say to that ?"

" Well, she repeats as 'ow it isn't 'erself that minds, but it's along of her friends, they bein' like to regard the Pope as an inkybus, though what she meant I know not an' I care not, and a raxonary drag on progress. And I ups once more an' ' Well, Miss,' I says, ' dash about you do and flash about you do, and never will I deny it; but I'm not seeing much progress about your dashin' and your flashin', not with prices what they are an' soaring steady.' For dash she do, an' in and out all day, and her friends likewise, these three blessed days, not to mention the newspaper young men, she writing for the *Babbacombe Bugle*, an' signs herself ' Clarionette,' as Mr. Tuke of the *Wilchurch Argus* told me hisself, and have a good laugh over her he did in this very room. And twice did I carry back the 'Oly Father with me own hands, and twice did she carry him down again, and there you may see 'im leanin' against the dresser, an' what to do I know not."

She paused and folded her hands.

" Well, anyhow," said I, " Miss Silver's course of lectures at the Morris Institute only goes on for three weeks, I think; and after that I've got a beautiful lodger for you, Mrs. Bolton. A Mr. John Raikes; he was a sergeant, and very badly wounded, and became a Catholic in hospital here. Miss Travers is giving him a part-time job at their house; and he'll do some secretarial work at the Social Guild, which'll keep him from standing up too much, and he'll do odds and ends for me. He's a very steady fellow and a good Catholic, and you'll like him and you'll be sure of your rent. So what do you say to that ?"

" Anything for that young lady," she exclaimed, lifting hands and eyes to heaven, " *anything* for that sweet young lady most willingly would I do. And anything to oblige your Reverence, it goes without saying. And as for the pore gentlemen as has been wounded, there's

nothing I wouldn't do for them as is but right an' proper an' ever will be. So it's thrice grateful an' willing I am for your Reverence's kind offer. Though as for Miss Barbara Travers, who, if ever a angel dropped from heaven she is him, why ever she don't marry I cannot tell, though the man's not living who'd be good enough."

" I've always had half a hope for my friend Captain Orwylstree, d'you know! He was a fine soldier, and he'd give her a lovely home. And he's a very sensible sort of Catholic. You heard him make a speech at our soldiers' club once, if you remember!"

" Do I not!" she replied, once more looking heavenwards. " And God bless his kind heart, and wanted to make me dance the 'Esitation Waltz or some such, he did, an' him in that lovely uniform an' all. And a dream of a pair they'd make, the lambs!"

" Well, say a Hail Mary it may happen if it's meant to."

I rose.

" Many a one I will," she promised. " And if your Reverence could but pop up one moment to Miss Silver's an' put in a word for the 'Oly Father, you could get round her *I'm* sure, an' the pore holy gentleman be in his proper place once more. Respectful do I beg it."

I whistled.

However, after a moment I decided to try. I wanted to see Miss Silver. . . .

So I ascended, and timidly knocked at her door.

" Come . . ." called a rather reedy voice.

I entered, and stood hesitating.

" Excuse me," I said, " I am a Catholic priest, and Mrs.——"

" The Priest?" she cried, rising. " But how too interesting! Let me welcome you. Dare I feel your coming indicates a—an Approach? an Attitude? . . ."

" I'm sure," said I, very frightened, " that I can hardly regard myself as—er, *symbolical*. I merely——"

" Oh, but let me hope it!" she interrupted. " An offered hand! A—— If but the great Roman Church would . . . oh! . . . *one* step! . . . *forward!*"

I resolved to alter all my tactics.

" I knew from Mrs. Bolton," said I, " that you were following the lectures on the Ethics of Hygiene at the Morris Institute, and that you were a stranger in Wilchurch; and I more than hoped I might be able to be of a little use to you. . . ."

"Oh?" she queried, rather surprised, but evidently curious.

"Coming as you do from——" suddenly I forgot where Babbacombe was; I plunged recklessly: "from the Land's End—I keep longing to go there—I thought it just possible you mightn't know that the Social Guild has rather an important centre here. We co-operate a good deal with the Institute."

"*Indeed?*" she said, more and more astonished.

"We had a little strike here lately," I went on, "at the jam factory. The strike was rather complicated, and involved the whole turnip industry; but the men were in the right, and that was recognized till the Tolstoi Tribunal introduced a good deal of bad blood and outside speakers; and things were looking ugly till the Cathedral, the Morris Institute, and the Social Guild went in a combined deputation and saw managers and men together. Though, I confess, it was the personal touch which smoothed things rather than argument. The representative of the factory and the leader of the men had both, by an odd coincidence, forgotten their handkerchiefs; and a priest, who is a friend of mine, by extraordinary good luck had a clean one, and lent it to each of them. After that all went well."

She actually laughed.

"But how splendid!" she cried. "How *sharing!* The true fraternal touch."

"That is why," I went on hurriedly, "I so much value getting into personal contact with intelligent people from other parts. Now *your* presence, Miss Silver, is exceptionally fortunate. You come from the South, and *we* are a great link between the Midlands and the North. I expect the social problems at Babbacombe are rather —special; but you know how important the North is. Now we can put a whole lot of unpublished information in your way. In fact, I may say that since Mrs. Bolton tells me you represent the *Babbacombe Bugle*, I don't see why you shouldn't regularly supply them with a lot of unique matter which they'd never get otherwise."

Her eyes sparkled. Though dishevelled, she looked quite attractive when sincere.

"I expect we'd be grateful, if you could possibly find time," said I, "to look in at our Leo Club one night. Named, of course, after Pope Leo XIII. No doubt you know his series of social encyclicals well. Working-men here are not so extraordinarily keen students and debaters as in the North, but they get a very good grip on those encyclicals. Of course, every Papal pronouncement has an all but limitless influence. Come and join one of our dis-

cussions. Mr. Burton of the Morris Institute often comes, and our vice-president actually held a scholarship there."

"I shall come," she said, smiling and holding out her hand frankly, "and *listen*. I thank you sincerely."

On my way down I put my head in at the kitchen.

"Don't worry about that picture, Mrs. Bolton," said I. "She's a nice girl, and she'll put it back of her own accord."

She did.

Chapter II

I WENT straight on from this interview to the Travers's, and asked for Barbara.

The maid favoured me with the information that she was out playing golf with Captain Blake, whom she defined as a gentleman; but otherwise she had nothing to say except that they'd certainly be in to tea, so I said I'd go up and wait.

I entered the drawing-room, and there, to my amazement, was Reggie Orwylstree.

"Hullo, Reggie," said I. "I've just been talking about you."

"Thank you," said he, "for your kind words. Where's Barbara?"

"Playing golf," said I, "with Captain Blake."

"What's he?" said Reggie.

"A gentleman," I said. "I'm quoting Elspeth, who vouches for the fact."

He growled.

"They'll be in to tea," I hastened to assure him; "and, if I may ask, what are *you* doing here?"

"Staying a few days," said he, vaguely. "Meant to look you up a bit later."

"I should hope so. But why didn't I know anything about your coming?"

"Only settled a day or two ago. Met Barbara in London. I—er, just rolled into the Oratory to see if there were any of the fellows about and——"

"I trust," said I, "you all had a pleasant and profitable conversation."

"Oh yes," said he serenely. "I saw old Barlow, and Teddy Fitzjames, and that awful little blighter, Shooten, and one or two others; but when I was—er, plunged in prayer, someone came up and slogged me over the head with a missal, and it was Barbara. She insisted on my coming down to stay for a couple of days, and I caught an earlier train than I'd expected, and here I am."

"How nice of her!"

"But what about this Blake?"

" He's a young man," said I, " of lofty views, wide experience, and prepossessing air."

" I thought you didn't know him."

" I don't. But we ought to think him that till we know the contrary, especially since he's playing golf with Barbara."

But at this moment Barbara came in, followed by a pleasant youth whom I'd not seen before.

She welcomed Reggie, said she was glad he'd managed to come early, that she was sorry she'd been out, and introduced Captain Blake.

The two young men grunted at each other, and remained like highly-dignified icebergs which had happened to collide, but never intended to let it occur again.

Tea appeared.

" You know, it was such luck my meeting Reggie," said Barbara, as she poured out. " I was saying my prayers in the Oratory——"

" When he came up and hit you over the head with a missal," I murmured.

" He did no such thing !" she indignantly cried. " But I heard someone coughing and growling so desperately behind me, that I *had* to look round, and there was Reggie."

" And you asked him down ?"

" Well, he said he was running down to see you," she said, " and wondered if we could put him up."

" How nice of him !" said I, contemplating Reginald. " But why on earth," I added, " people should come by earlier trains than they arrange, I can't imagine."

" How rude you are !" she cried. " To see some more of *me*, of course."

" I only said that to give him the chance of saying so himself," said I; " but," I continued to Captain Blake, " Captain Orwylstree cherishes such a devotion to the exact truth that——"

" Here I say you know by Jove !" ejaculated Reggie, all in a breath.

But at this moment old Mr. Travers came in, and saved the situation, which was beginning to bewilder Captain Blake.

I told him I had been getting a room for Sergeant Raikes, and how relieved I was he was equipped with a job. It was a desperate business; even Wilchurch was full of out-of-works; and when men like Raikes, who could never really do a full day, were out of luck, getting in again seemed really at times impossible.

"So the present arrangement," said I, "is ideal."

"I'm getting an old fellow," said he, "and a drag on Barbara. We need a man in the house, and he and Elspeth and old Mrs. Evans ought to do the work well, and yet not have too much of it."

"Have you heard of any of the others?" asked Barbara.

"Well, Hallinan's gone home to Australia, as you know; as for the Corporal, I've not had a letter from him for ages; but he hates writing, anyhow. The last I heard of him he was a sort of porter in a cinema, but he won't do that long. His ideal is a pub."

I mentioned one or two other names. But the whole subject of jobs was apt to make me despondent.

"It's no consolation," said Mr. Travers, "to be told the country's out of gear, and can't help being so for some time yet. As things go, I don't see how it's to get *in* gear again."

"You're a pessimist, sir," said Reggie.

"I'm old, and I don't want revolutions, but I shouldn't *like* to see it in the old sort of gear again. But I can't see that all these gentlemen who talk about reconstruction have got so much as a real principle between them. Least of all the Cathedral, though the Dean's a man of good will; in fact, they mostly are."

"What about the Morris Institute?" I asked.

"I don't like it," he said. "Frankly, I don't. But you know more about it than I do. No. We look to the Guild, Father! The country'll never prosper till it gets God back."

Captain Blake looked so aghast at the mention of God in a drawing-room that it became clear he wasn't a Catholic.

I shifted across and sat down next to him.

"Are you billeted in Wilchurch?" I said. "Or d'you live here? I'm afraid I practically know no one in the town."

"We live at Hanton," he said. "But I've got a job on this unemployment stunt at the Town Hall. It's the Government department. Nothing directly to do with the army. But most of the pensioners still in hospital come through my hands. So if you're interested in that sort of thing I might be of some use."

He spoke rather stiffly, but was polite.

"I'm delighted to hear it," I said. "It'll probably be a great help. D'you find the men know what they want?"

"A minority does," he said. "Most of 'em have no idea where they are. A lot, especially from hospital, of course, can't go back to their old *sort* of job, d'you see, and ten to one when you've got 'em a billet they won't stick to it."

"Restless?"

"That's right. After-war nerves. Can't settle down."

"But they'd like to, d'you think? I mean, they've got the *idea* of working . . .?"

"They're like most of us," said he, with a short laugh. "Got to do something, but want to do as little as possible for as much as possible. Don't blame 'em. But lots of them can go on strike, lucky devils; *we* can't!"

"You don't think they combine the notions of fair pay and fair work?"

"Tell you the truth," said he, "human nature's the same everywhere. Get all you can, and have a good time while you've got it."

"Well, perhaps I believe more in human nature than that. As Mr. Travers says, human nature needs principles to govern itself with; but it's good stuff in itself!"

"Oh, it's all right, I expect," said he, vaguely.

"It's magnificent stuff," I said, more emphatically; "and even if they do try to get what they can, they haven't got a lot, anyway, and they help one another out of it more than—well, most of us. On the whole, there's more sharing," said I, thinking of Miss Silver, "among the folks who've not got much to share, than among the moneyed classes."

"He's a frightful socialist," said Barbara.

"Beneath his meek and mild exterior," said Reggie, at a great pace, and fully determined to pay me out at all costs, "he conceals the most red and revolutionary sentiments."

"No but I say look here by Jove!" said I, and Captain Blake gasped.

"Anyway, let's meet," I went on. "You might come round sometime and have a bad cigarette. I want to know how the Town Hall stunt really works."

"Thanks very much," said he. "Miss Travers has very kindly asked me to look in whenever I like, and I hope to be round a lot."

"What the Corporal wants," said Barbara, at the most amazing tangent, "is to marry. A Catholic girl. That would be a mixed marriage one really could approve of."

Everyone looked rather blank.

"I mean," she said, "a good Catholic girl would keep him in order; and he's such a nice man that he'd never break the promises, and he'd probably end happily himself."

" I've known very few mixed marriages," said her father, " that have worked out well."

" I hate 'em," said Reggie, with emphasis.

Then he felt awkward, because of Captain Blake.

" Mind you," said he to him, " I'm not saying a word against—er, anybody; but—well, I'm sure you'll agree with me that it's very much better that—well, it's pretty awful if the parents don't agree about the things that really matter, y'know; and then the kiddies and—well, there you are, y'know," he broke off rather abruptly.

" Still," said Captain Blake, feeling rather at a loss, " I suppose both sides would—I mean there'd be give and take, wouldn't there? and you could agree not to mention religion. . . ."

" You *could*," said Reggie, so grimly that Barbara laughed and went off at another tangent so successfully that I renewed my homage to her calm skill and talked about nothing in particular till Blake got up to go.

I got up with him.

" Are you going back to the Town Hall?" I asked. " Because if so we might go together as far as Curfew Corner, and I can show you how to get to our house."

" Thanks very much," said he, and we went out.

" How did you meet the Travers's?" I asked, when we got outside.

" Playing golf," said he. " Miss Travers was there with a fellow I knew and his sister, and they suggested a foursome. D'you know them well?"

" Her brother was a great friend of mine: he got killed quite early on."

" Fine chap, from all accounts."

" One of the best," I said, " and the best of those."

" They were always the ones to get knocked out."

" He was a little like Captain Orwylstree; but a bit more brilliant. I don't mean clever, exactly, though they are a clever family. But —radiant, somehow . . . *In sidera sidereus*. . . ."

" That their motto?"

" No. But it might have been his. . . . Anyhow, how d'you like Orwylstree?"

" Bit of a fanatic, isn't he?"

" A fanatic?" I laughed. " It's the first time I've heard him called that. What makes you think so?"

" Well, he sort of lashed out about marriages. But I suppose I

can't expect you to agree with me, padre! Still, Miss Travers did give him a bit of a snub, what?"

"A snub?"

"Changed the subject rather abruptly, didn't she?"

"Oh well, that might have been for your sake."

"My sake?"

"Well, there's no obligation on you to think the same as we do about mixed marriages."

"But I suppose even R.C.'s aren't all the same way of thinking about that sort of thing?"

"When it's a question of faith, we don't have personal opinions at all. We believe, and we all believe exactly the same thing. In a question like mixed marriages we all know they're allowed, but in that house you won't find anyone that likes them."

"I should think Miss Travers was pretty broad-minded?"

"She is; but not lax-minded. And if you ask me, I think she expected she'd conveyed to you her views on mixed marriages a moment before."

I was rather alarmed at saying this, because all things considered, it was rather cheek. Still, I thought that as he clearly hadn't taken her hint, he might take mine.

However, we'd reached the corner.

"Look here, padre," said he. "I can take you at your word, can I, and come round some evening? There might be one or two things I'd like to ask you about."

"Of course," said I. "Send a postcard a day or two ahead, that's all. And don't think Reggie Orwylstree's a fanatic. He's quite a good sort, really."

"Right-o," he said; and we parted.

Chapter III

THE very next night I called on Miss Silver to escort her round to the Leo Club, where a meeting was to take place which I was sure would interest her.

She was very excited, and foresaw good copy for the *Bugle*.

"I shall be *very* shy!" she exclaimed, as we proceeded. "I shall be quite terrified! I've never had *anything* to do with your people, you know; and two girls from Hereford who came to cocoa last night were quite *furious* with me for consenting to come at all, because they're sure you're so dreadfully *reactionary* and they're convinced I shall fall a victim to the glamour of Rome."

"There isn't much glamour about the Leo Club," said I.

"That's just *it!* It's all so terribly puzzling. They say it all looks so simple and above-board, and all the while there's *something underneath* which captures you before you know where you are! They say Roman priests are so *plausible*—oh dear! I quite forgot I was talking to *you!*"

"Never mind," said I. "I'm quite used to it. But if only people wouldn't suppose priests to be benighted idiots and *also* the subtlest of diplomats, it would simplify matters. I'm always sorry for folks who have to imagine that the Church is such a lot of contradictory things."

"Well, anyhow, I'm sure you'll not ask me to do anything I *oughtn't* to. You know I've never even seen your ceremonies, and I shan't know how to behave! You know I *couldn't* take holy water! It wouldn't be—*true!*"

"The nearest you'll get," said I, "to holy water will be highly respectable tea. If they don't forget to make it. And for your bread of iniquity, biscuits, perhaps, with luck."

"Oh, are you so condescending to human frailty as to have tea? How splendid! I'm sure we shall make friends over tea."

"Listen," I said. "I'll tell you who'll be there. There'll be Father Fawkham. He's a sort of chaplain for the whole thing here. He knows a lot about it. It's not my department at all, really,

though it stands to reason I see how deadly important it is, and I'm all for it. Then there'll be Mr. Winterton, who's the lay head of this particular branch; and Mr. O'Hara, that's the secretary; and we've got two men staying with us from High Green in Lancashire, who'll contribute no end of solid sense and energy; and——"

"Will they *all* be men?" she asked anxiously.

"Well, I expect there'll be Miss Longfield and Mrs. Ash, of the Catholic Women's League, and probably Miss Poole, who's a very well-known school-teacher here—in fact, she represents the women teachers on all educational things in Wilchurch. . . ."

"But I thought Roman Catholics took *no* interest in education!"

I remained silent.

"And there are Catholic Feminists?" she enquired in quite a deprecating voice.

"I will show you a small textbook—at least, it serves very well as a textbook, called *Christian Feminism*," said I. "It's true that in some ways Catholic Feminism doesn't flourish, or hasn't till lately, as well as it did in the thirteenth century——"

"The dear quaint Middle Ages!" she exclaimed. "Of course, you'd be able to tell me about *them*. But——"

"I *will*," said I. "Make no mistake about it. Where d'you put the date of the Renaissance?"

"Ah!" she said, "the Renaissance," and she looked yearningly before her. But all she saw were the windows of the 6½d. bazaar, and they failed to inspire either her or me. So I broke off.

"I'll just tell you in a few words," said I, "what's going to happen to-night. For some time we've had here in Leo House what we call preliminary study-classes. No doubt you'll hear a sort of account of what they've achieved. But now we are inaugurating a proper Study-Circle, or Club, as it's called."

"Oh, I know all about those," she interrupted. "We have one in Bidmoor, where I live. In fact, I think I was partly responsible in getting it up. I love to hope . . ." she again peered wistfully into the gloom. But this time she only saw the Conservative Club, with Canon Chawner and Colonel Warburton-Smith seated near the window, and this again disheartened her.

"May I ask how you work it?" I said.

"Well, of course, we *meet*——" she began.

"Who's we?"

"Oh, a little *group*. People who *think*—who feel there's so much to *do*. . . ."

"Yes; but all educated people?"

She hesitated a little.

"Well, we're most anxious to have the workers, of course! We feel we aren't complete without them. I'm always urging it. But it's so difficult! Sometimes we've had one or two; but they don't *stick* to it; and they're so *hard to elevate*. We talk to them, of course——"

"Ah. Yes. What about?"

"Well, we have one member who's very well up in all modern problems; and he reads papers on alcohol and eugenics and so on, and it's most *instructive* and valuable. But I daresay most of us find it hard to keep abreast, though we try, and read and discuss. . . . But we do seek to introduce a little colour into those grey lives, a little sense of the Divine . . . the Beyond. Dante! Athens! Old legends from Egypt and the East . . . all that can show the Spirit of Man struggling and striving and reaching ever upwards. . . ."

"In short," I said, "you form a group that has lectures, I suppose; and from time to time debates?"

"Oh yes; debates, of course. We had a splendid one last session on—Which came first, Thought or Language?"

"Which did you decide?"

"Oh, language, of *course*. . . . And we know all about Evolution, I *needn't* say."

"Lucky people. But I'd like to say at once our Study Clubs are *not*, first, Lecture Clubs. Not even clubs where *courses* of lectures are given; still less isolated lectures, Dante, Evolution, and so on. Not even clubs, where the lectures are given by the members themselves; still less clubs where they're just talked *to*. Nor yet debating clubs, nor yet what they call Instruction Classes, which the Cathedral's very keen on here. The Cathedral Clergy take a book and read it aloud to their audience and sometimes discuss what they've read after the tea-interval. . . . All these things are excellent, no doubt; in fact, they all exist in our Catholic parish here; but they aren't what we mean by *Study Clubs*."

"But what are they, then?"

"I expect you'll hear it put pretty plainly to-night. Anyway, we'll be there in a minute."

We ascended the spiral staircase of the 'oldest house in Wilchurch,' and entered the circular room where we had our meetings. The building was really part of an old tower-chapel which joined on to the city walls, and for the time being we occupied it. Above this

room was the library, and a sort of reading-room, and the C.S.G. offices.

Except for a crucifix and a very old stone statue of Our Lady, and a portrait of Leo XIII., the room was unadorned; not more than a dozen persons were present; the only lady, after all, was Mrs. Ash. I rapidly introduced Miss Silver, and Mrs. Ash, true to her sex's power of intuition, instantly grasped the situation. She executed a sort of mental enveloping movement, so that Miss Silver, while being made to feel quite happy and at home, also began to feel like a little school-girl, and sat as still as a mouse. A contented school-girl! Happy Miss Silver! I had always admired Mrs. Ash.

After the preliminary odds and ends of business, Mr. Winterton made a statement. The study-class which had existed now for five years was still to exist; but something more was needed if Wilchurch Catholics were to be able to hold their own, and more than that, to lead in local affairs. The class had followed the usual procedure. It had taken for its last textbook *Christian Citizenship*, and the four chapters had provided material for no less than sixteen lessons. The director, whose rôle had usually been filled by Father Fawkham, had first read out as much of each chapter—sometimes no more than one section—as he thought the class could assimilate; explained its more important points, and was then questioned by the class, which numbered about fifteen or eighteen members. During the following week the members discussed or thought about what they had heard, and arrived primed with further questions at the next meeting. There had been three outside lecturers, and one lecture from the Director himself. The choice of the outside speakers had been rather bold. The class had invited Canon Peabody, a well-known Greek scholar, to describe the main lines followed by Greek civilization; Professor Burden had explained the chief contributions made by the Roman Empire towards the creation of Europe; and no less a person than the Rabbi of the Peckley Synagogue had given the Jewish view of the structure of Old Testament life. A vigorous discussion followed each of these lectures, especially the last. Father Fawkham's lecture showed how modern civilization was unintelligible apart from a general knowledge of these ancient civilizations, the Hebrew, the Greek, and the Roman, without which it would never be existing at all. No more was aimed at than a bird's-eye view; but it was wished to enlarge horizons, to enrich imaginations, to unparochialize the ideas of the students, and to show them how much deeper the roots of modern problems

struck than into merely modern soil. Besides this, the class had made a tour of Wilchurch under the care of the Dean of the Cathedral, and Miss Imelda Smith had afterwards written an essay, showing the social bearing of many of the facts the Dean had told them about the ancient buildings, monastic and educational, of the place. So good work had been done. But though the class was to continue, it was felt that a more complete and scientific study of narrower problems must be made possible for a smaller group who should have both time and wish to apply their brains to them; and that was why a Study Club was to be inaugurated. Since the idea was new to Wilchurch he asked Father Fawkham to explain what had been done elsewhere.

"But this is frightfully serious," whispered Miss Silver.

"Of course," said I. "So's life," I added sententiously.

She sighed.

"It makes me feel so terribly amateur!"

"We all started as amateurs. I'm nothing else now. But these northerners aren't. And the Study-Club won't be. Father Fawkham's beginning. . . ."

"We've done very well, so far," said Father Fawkham rapidly. "We've got to do better still. We're going to try to be as good at Wilchurch as they are at Preston and Rochdale and Oldham. We're going to get a move on right now. A study club has been suggested, and we mean to have it. Mr. Holden from High Green will probably have something to tell us of what they're doing there. Mr. Holden, as you know, is a real live wire, and we want to get some of his current through to *us*."

At this point the bull-dog, who always attended these meetings, snapped at a moth.

"Be quiet, Bill," said Father Fawkham. "But I expect that's a hint to us to get to business. And we're only a few here, but that's as it should be. A Study Club *ought* to be a few only. Sound brains, real keenness, and above all, perseverance is what's needed. Sound brains, because we don't want brilliance or epigram, but we *do* want solid intelligent work. However, more people can do that than think they can. Keenness means that members will give a *good deal* of time, even after their hard day's work, to the business of the club. And perseverance, because there are bound to be dull tracts. Heavy going. Statistics aren't romantic, and there'll be plenty of them. Now, lots of men with excellent heads and plenty of keenness still can't afford the time or are honestly too tired at

the end of the day, to come here or to write essays at home. So it's no reproach to them if they don't belong. They'll come to the class. They'll go to the Lectures and Debates at the Parish Hall. They'll belong to the C.Y.M.S. or the S.V.P. and do good work there. But in the club we want regular attendance and the other qualifications I've mentioned. So we're starting with seven: Mr. Winterton, Mr. O'Hara, Mr. Edward Jones, and Mr. John Jones, Mrs. Ash, and Miss Longfield, and Mr. Atherton, though he's not yet a Catholic. Now, in this town it's really wages that are the most pressing problem; that and housing. On the whole, I think we can manage a successful attack on both these problems this session and next. For textbooks we propose to have J. A. Ryan's *Living Wage* to start with; and," said he for the sake of Miss Silver, whose presence he intermittently remembered, " a list of books on the subject, with a brief criticism pointing out their leading points and main defects will be posted on the notice-board, and all of them can be consulted in the library upstairs. I should like to make it clear that I'm not springing these topics, out of the many possible ones, upon our members, because we've discussed this club very thoroughly together, haven't we ? and this really is an inauguration and not just one more preliminary meeting. Very well. Next week we start on Ryan. Mr. O'Hara will read a section, which we shall discuss, taking principles rather than details, and certain questions will be set, to which every member has *to write answers during the week*. Now, that's *never* got to be left out. This is where the perseverance comes in. A question needn't be answered at great length; a quite short answer, even a line or two, will do; but there must *be* an answer. Just one point to be made clear right now. Never put down one word you aren't sure you mean. No *talk*. No frills. Hard business every time. If you don't know what to say, say that. Sooner than have to say that, you'll hunt up some member of the club and thrash it out with him before the next meeting. If your opinion doesn't coincide with his, so much the better. If we all agree, we'll have no discussion. And you'll probably find your practical opinions differ because you aren't clear about your principles. Very well. At the next meeting the answers are read out. Since we're so few, we shall probably all have time to read our answers. If we haven't, we'll take turns or postpone the reading of the others till next time. It's often a very good thing to come back a step or two, and see what we think of our answers a time or two ago, after we've studied a bit farther. So keep your answers.

Have a regular connected set of documents at the end of the course. Then re-read them and see how you've developed. I daresay if Mr. Winterton has time he'd be willing to take the papers home and mark 'em. I may say we're very lucky to have Mr. Winterton for leader of our club. You know him, and you know he knows his job. He won't do all the talking by any means. He'll direct *our* talking. He'll add evidence from other quarters to what we can pick up, and he'll illustrate conditions in Wilchurch by conditions elsewhere. On and off we'll have special stunts. I may say that we'll be on delicate ground, because a lot of important people in this town aren't likely to see eye to eye with us in all our conclusions. But we've got good backers. The Dean of the Cathedral is very sympathetic, and you probably know that one of the Cathedral choristers has written an excellent little monograph on the jam industry, started by the late Mayor, you know. He wrote it immediately under the Dean's protection. It made rather a sensation, especially when the Sunday after its publication there was a Cathedral anthem which said: ' In our gates is every kind of apple, new and old. . . .' and the author had to sing the solo. The Mayor's three nieces became High Church on the strength of it, and attend St. Titus's ever since, though they always used to turn up their noses at incense. . . ."

"So would anyone," said Mrs. Ash, who was a convert, " at *that* incense. . . ."

This broke up the meeting for a while, and to her regret Mrs. Ash departed, having an appointment. This left Miss Silver the only lady present, and she was unanimously elected to make the tea, which she did with much éclat, heating the tea-pot first, which we should never have remembered to do, and altogether coming in for a lot of attention, which cheered her rather drooping spirits.

After the tea Father Fawkham asked Mr. Holden to speak. He stood up, squared his shoulders and began:

" Reverend Fathers, Lady and Gentlemen " (Miss Silver quivered all over with delight), " Mr. Winterton has told us about the study-class you've been having, and Father Fawkham has told us about the study-circle you're going to have, and it was grand to hear what you've done and what you hope to do, and may you do it. But I've a word I want to say upon this subject, and this is it. The study-class had for its textbook *Christian Citizenship*. That means it believes in Jesus Christ, and, of course, it does; so do all of us, those

that's here. And the study-club is going to discuss wages and housing, and from what I know of the way discussions on those subjects go you'll be talking of the right given to all men by God to lead a decent life in decent surroundings. That means you believe in God and you intend to examine what's God's views are on wages; what God's got to say on housing. Well, you'll come to certain conclusions, and unless you want to remain shut up in this ancient old tower, you've got to go out to Wilchurch an' say: 'This is what we think right and wrong on these subjects, and this is what we consider is God's law on the matter, and this is what we ought to do as Christians.' Now, ladies and gentlemen," said he, warming to it, "that's all very well for the Dean and his young choristers and the ladies of St. Titus's and the respectable folk of this old town, and the steady, chapel-going folks and the people who get their names down as patrons of your concerts and your theatricals and your hospital-fêtes and what not. They're all Christians, or think they are. They all believe in God, or say they do. But whether they really do or don't—and there's a big query mark to that, if you ask my opinion—I'll lay you what money you like that the majority of the folks that gets the wages and has to live in the houses don't; and them as gets *at* them don't, not even theoretically. Who do I mean? Why, the Tolstoi Tribunal that I've been visiting; and the most at the Morris Institute, as Mr. Winterton'll be the first to acknowledge; and now I'll go back and say right out that the Church folks and the concert patrons don't either, the most often, let them say what they will, and even think it. But I'm not talking about them so much as the real leaders that affect the mass of the people even here; they *know* they don't, and it's no good your starting on what ought or oughtn't to be, bringing in God and Jesus Christ with *them*. The half of the time they'll deny your premises even if they accept your conclusions. I've been about a bit these last three days in the various pubs., which is just what you reverend gentlemen can't do, though I'm not suggesting that Father Fawkham and the other reverend Father don't know the sort of thing that's said there. But I say that in this sleepy old town, same as in the big ones, you'll hear the truths of Christianity, as Catholics hold them, out and out denied by the ordinary working man, because, though in his heart he wants to believe and in a way does, the leaders he listens to don't believe and don't want *him* to. And he repeats them, and him and his friends they accustom one another to hearing that sort of talk, and more than ever since the war; and men have got more darin' in

what they say and more sick with the whole bundle of tricks that made up the so-called civilization which landed them *in* the war. So what I say, and what I go nowhere without I hear my friends say, is, we want to be taught how to defend these very principles Father Fawkham was alluding to, that there's a God; that He matters; that Jesus Christ isn't just a name nor yet wasn't a mere dreamer that's kept things back rather than the opposite; and that the New Testament's to be trusted and has things to tell us right here about these very problems that we think is so modern. So I say you want, and we want, and we all want regular Catholic instruction in things like: Why I believe in God, why I believe in Jesus Christ, and not only why I believe in indulgences and why I'm not a fool for taking holy water. We want "apologetic" clubs, though I hate the name, we not having to apologize for anything, but it's the official word and we understand it here at all events. And I daresay I've been none too helpful about your new club, seeing as I've only saddled you with a new job on top of it. But that's my own opinion and it's more than that, for you'll find never a priest in the north, or few enough, whom I'm not repeating the words of. But the priests themselves need to be reminded of it by men like us who see the world now and again from a different angle like. And I'll not regret having come from High Green—well, not for many reasons; but I'll not regret it if I've made that point clear. Underneath all your club and class discussions is God and Jesus Christ, and it's over them that the battle's to be fought in the long run, and may God forgive us if we can't fight it, for besides us Catholics there'll soon enough be never a man who can."

He sat down.

Very little was said after that, save by way of brief agreement. An immense solemnity seemed to invade the little room; the august names that had been mentioned were no new thing there; they belonged to it, or rather, it to them. In the massive walls of the old fortress-chapel the Catholic civilization of underlying centuries beat like a heart; the Faith thrilled like a soul; the very stones cried out and chanted their unchanged *Credo*. The strong virility of the Lancashire lad, his robust voice, his direct grasp upon the very innermost of the matter, were part and parcel of a mighty Life. Life had throbbed here strongly; here men had fought, died, sinned, repented, prayed. Here still must they so do, drawing the same life from the same source. The same Crucifix spread wide its

arms; from the same pierced human heart still sprang the divine vitality. It seemed natural that before we separated, we should kneel, and repeat *Our Father*, and the *I Believe*, and, looking to the ancient statue of the Virgin Mother, the immemorial *Hail Mary*.

We went out into the starlit town. I walked with Miss Silver and allowed the others who were going our way to get somewhat ahead. Miss Silver was very silent.

After a while I asked her if she'd liked it.

"I—I don't know," she said. "It was all so different . . . from what I'm used to, and from what I'd expected. I can't say what I mean. Looking back it all feels so—so *anæmic*, what we used to do. I shall never dare to write to the papers again. I feel I've been—frivolous. Yet I *thought* I was in earnest. And now I shan't know what to do."

She searched for her handkerchief and dabbed her eyes.

"Oh, but you mustn't give up," I cried. "You've seen nothing whatever to make you want to do that! Surely, just the opposite. No, no! There's ever so much in which we can co-operate . . . we could correspond . . ."

"Oh, but you surely wouldn't think that worth your while?"

"Of *course* we would! Good heavens! we're not conceited. We're *learning*. We're struggling frightfully hard, with our lack of knowledge, our lack of interest, our poverty, our lack of men and women who *care*. . . . We want every kind of co-operation and fellowship we possibly can have."

"But *could* you, as Roman Catholics, have anything to do with me? Because—well, I never thought I'd feel just what I *am* feeling now; but I'm not any nearer believing in your faith, I'm afraid, and——"

"You believe in God, and in the brotherhood of men through Jesus Christ?"

"I don't know that I do!" she said rather piteously. "I've talked a lot . . . I've—oh well, you *know* the way we talk—about modern times, and restatement of old ideas and—oh, but it *does* seem so unreal when I see a man like Mr. Holden—so unhesitating, so open-eyed too—oh dear, I don't know *anything!*"

She was an impulsive girl, and I thought her despondency might be less heavy on the next day; so I just promised we'd keep in touch,

and would send her our literature and would like to know what she was doing, and after a while we said good-night.

"Thank you *so* much," she said. "I don't believe I shall forget it all. I'm sure I've been helped."

"We've *shared!*" said I, smiling.

"Oh, *don't!*" she cried, and ran down the little passage which led to Mrs. Bolton's.

Chapter IV

A LITTLE while after this Miss Silver invited me to tea. I found her alone, and rather anxious, for she had also invited her two lady friends and Mr. Tuke of the *Wilchurch Argus*, and she hadn't the least idea how we should fuse. Nor had I; and I recommended ourselves to the benison of His Holiness, now restored to his proper place above a massive sideboard. I trusted I was not disrespectful in thinking I observed the tiniest flicker of a smile at the corner of his lips. Anyhow, round his eyes were amiable little crinkles.

Miss Elsie Newton and Miss Malfa Sykes came in, though it was long before I discovered their Christian names, because these three young ladies called one another stalwartly by their surnames until a crisis of emotion re-feminized them. Miss Newton was downright and uncompromising, and Miss Sykes rather ecstatic and talked almost entirely in capitals; but I liked them both, so far as I could divert my attention from Mr. Tuke, who was very young and frightened and felt far more at home with Mrs. Bolton than with any of us.

"I don't know whether I ought to be sitting down to tea with you at *all*," said Miss Newton, very abruptly.

"Am I a bad character?" I asked.

"I expect you're congratulating yourself on having captured Silver! No doubt your Church applauds you, but I can't say *I* do."

"Are you captured, Miss Silver?" said I.

"She is *not*," said Miss Newton. "*I'll* see to that. But I—*I* knew what you were up to. *I* saw."

"The Wilchurch Press," said Mr. Tuke, melodramatically, "is his slave. Journals of *both* sides."

"The Power of the Press!" cried Miss Sykes, with nondescript emotion.

"Do I drive you hard?" I asked.

"More like coo," said he. "Coo, and we come. But ever since

that night you took down the Belgian gentleman's speech for us—we not being able to *take* French," he explained, "and got us copied into every paper of the land, it's us for you."

"It's very kind of you," said I. "It was an amusing job. Did you see that, Miss Newton? Amazing incidents during the German occupation of Belgium. Such headlines! Jesuits in disguise. Priestly Pimpernels. Clerics as carters, pastry-cooks, anything you like."

"It was well known," she said, "priests were pro-German. I don't want to hear about it. What did they do?"

"Work in conjunction with Nurse Cavell," I replied. "Getting wounded and maltreated prisoners out of Belgium into Holland, or even England. And co-operate with the Admiralty in getting news across about imminent air-raids."

She looked a little blank.

"But I don't think I've gone far towards capturing Miss Silver. She's not even on parole."

"Well, she came back from your meeting absolutely hypnotized. I don't know *what* she could have heard there. She said she'd never seen anything like it."

"She could hardly speak about it, next day even!" said Miss Sykes. "She sat for hours telling us about it. The Northerner! The Earnest Priest—yet so *human!* And the *Tea!*—And then the Prayers . . .! So *old and strange!* How glad I am I wasn't there! And yet . . ." she looked doubtfully at Miss Newton.

"I really must say," I interrupted, "we're not extraordinary at all. We know perfectly well that crowds of institutions, societies, and what not, of any colour or creed, are far better equipped than we are. All we profess to have of special, is principles."

"But *we* are not unprincipled, *please!*" cried Miss Silver.

"What are your principles?"

"*Betterment!*" sighed Miss Sykes. "The Betterment of the Race—of fellow-sufferers."

"Excellent! But how do you judge what's better and what's worse?"

"A Fair Wage," said Miss Newton, "is obviously better than an unfair one."

"Yes, but how d'you judge what's *fair?* Equal shares all round?"

"Of course not."

"But aren't men equal?"

"Yes. No. At least they ought to be."

"Why? Does Nature give any hint of human equality?"

"No cake for anyone," she said with determination, "till there's bread for all."

"Ah. So you think everyone ought to have the chance of leading a certain sort of life?"

"A *human* life," said Miss Silver, very sensibly.

"And for that," said Miss Newton, "they must have more leisure and more money."

"*Play*-time," breathed Miss Sykes; and Mr. Tuke, who liked her very much, applauded.

"But what," I said, "is a human life? A luxurious life? A comfortable life? Who's going to set the standard so that you'll know when they've got *enough* money? And *what* are they to be free to do in playtime? Just anything? Lounge in a pub.?"

"Most certainly not. We shall take the drink question in hand from the outset. And *there* we know we shall have the Romanists against us." (Mr. Tuke winked at me.) "We shall start too, at once, by *educating*."

"So it's not just material betterment you want?"

"Of course not."

"Spiritual?"

"*Soul*-betterment," cried Miss Sykes.

"But what's soul?"

They all three began to speak at once, and subsided without saying anything.

"Let's say," said I, "they're to be taught to use their minds. And regulate their emotions. But use them on *what?* And regulate them by whose rule? Who's going to tell us what's true, so that we can think it? or what's good and beautiful, so that we can love it?"

Miss Sykes, somewhat embarrassed by the consciousness that Mr. Tuke's eyes were earnestly fixed upon her, murmured that those were mysteries.

"But," I urged, "educators can't educate towards something of which all they know is that it's a mystery. Some sort of truth and right must be agreed upon. But by whom?"

"The State shall uphold the Ideal."

"Any State? Prussia? China? The Capitalist State?"

"Oh dear! a right State, of course; the true State."

"But how does one know when a State's right and true? You

wouldn't get Prussia or China or any Government to acknowledge they were wrong and false."

"The *Government* isn't the State!"

"I agree. But what *is?*"

"The mass of right-minded men and women, of course."

"Oh dear! But who's to decide who's right-minded? How d'you know? Is the majority always the right-minded?"

"Alas, far from it. Else public opinion would long ago have abolished our present horrible system."

"Oh, an élite, then? A favoured few? A minority recognized by themselves as right? Yourselves, in short. But—most respectfully, who are *you?* The State, anyway! *L'Etat c'est moi.* There we are; back again, full circle, to Autocracy."

"You're only arguing for the sake of arguing," said Miss Newton. "I ought to know better than to chop logic with a Roman casuist!"

"Oh, *Elsie!*" cried Miss Silver; so I found that out.

"Forgive me," I said. "It was scarcely arguing. Probably I should agree with you about half the things you want done. But I don't think you're clear about *why* you want them done. I think I am. And I have principles which tell me why, and show me a lot more things to be done than even you, I fancy, want; and better things, that go deeper; and I have stronger motives. It's no good talking about progress till you're clear where you are, and where you want to go; and what sort of creature you are. Else you may be asking a wingless creature to fly, and to fly to the wrong place. And don't talk about the Race, still less about posterity, nor self-sacrifice, nor, again, self-determination, till you know what man is, what he's meant for, and how he may hope to become it."

"Ah! You talk. We *act!*"

"Listen! We've got a few, perfectly clear principles, without which, I consider, you *can't* safely act. Two sets, in fact, neither of which will we give up. Into the first set the Church doesn't enter at all. Isn't mentioned. Nor even Christianity. They are, we consider, warranted by pure reason. Without them, you'll merely act at random. We believe in the existence of God, who is *not* the world, nor us. God *is*. Necessarily. And God is absolute. An absolute authority. The whole ultimate well-being of the race and the group and the individual comes about through obeying the Divine law. All our duties are ultimately to God. For, that we have intelligence to know Him sufficiently, and free will to adapt ourselves to Him, we also hold as a principle. And again, that we are

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unities made up both of body and spirit. And that spirit is immortal. Therefore, that our duties and scope and goal are not limited to this body-soul period of living, but extend beyond it. Therefore, that not only material comfort, nor yet intellectual triumphs affecting our condition here and now, nor even that of posterity, in earthly conditions, will ultimately do for objective. Therefore, that all reform and legislation ought to use *at least* those principles, and that consequently only such as do will construct human life properly, for each man, or for groups, or the race."

"That seems *right*," said Miss Sykes, and Mr. Tuke thought so, too.

"Let him go on," said Miss Newton, magnificently.

"There is a second group of principles which we are given by what we call Revelation, and they are supernatural. Here certainly Our Lord, through whom this unique revelation was given, comes in, and so does the Church. But these I leave to one side, though along of them chiefly, and better, we reach the knowledge of man's true equality and fraternity and dignity. Now I say that all efforts on behalf of man which don't flow from these principles, which we boldly and logically apply in detail to each department, fall short of what must be done if we are to succeed. And I say that on the whole reformers neglect those principles. Our Guild studies these in themselves and in their application; and in that alone, if you like, it is better than many another such society, even if in all else it might be worse, though I don't think it is so."

"But you'll never," she said rather soberly, "get people at large to believe in all that. I don't myself. I have to be much less sure."

"People did once!" I said, "and there was a coherent society. And I'll tell you this," I added, not looking at Miss Sykes, "nine-tenths of the neurasthenia and the mental instability of our times is precisely due to lack of guiding life-*principles*. A doctor said so to me only yesterday; and I've always believed it."

"But mental instability may be a good symptom!" she cried. "Crystallized errors! To me, that is what your Church stands for. Break up all these dreadful out-of-date conventions and creeds! Let thought be active and form itself ever anew!"

"To some extent that may be good. Superficial, untrue formations, yes. They may be harmful. But unless a man, or nation, has some absolutely valid fundamental primary convictions, which are, in the long run, *right ways of being*, he's a mere flux, and

the nation mere chaos. The same doctor said to me he didn't see how a man, who really *lived out* his religious principles, could possibly be neurasthenic. And I said that I'd often noticed that neurasthenic religious people were, at some point, not allowing themselves to carry out their innermost religious convictions, and were accordingly in a state of deep-seated conflict, and downright miserable."

"He must have been a very odd doctor!"

"Not so unusual as you'd think. Far more than they suppose, even, but often consciously, doctors occupied with that department are coming round to the Catholic doctrine of the soul, and to recognize the inestimable value of Catholic principles and wishing they were true."

"I suppose you'd persuaded him."

"Not at all. He'd not require it. He works in the very big shell-shock and neuropathic hospital five miles from here; and as he emphasized, these men *can't* get well, because they want to *do* something with life—they seek a purpose—and can't offer themselves one; and they want a method to apply it to their existence in detail, and don't know of one. 'I,' he said, 'can analyze. I can show them where they're wrong, or what they lack; but it's for you, priests especially, to put 'em together again, and reveal to them satisfactory principles. For yours work. Only *I* can't honestly recommend them. For *I'm* not sure.' *I* said, 'Doctor, your method takes you a long way. It shows we have a lot of primary and secondary instincts which need governing and co-ordinating unless we're to get in a mess. You own they can only be governed by *ideas*. And you own *you* oughtn't to suggest ideas you believe to be false, or, *may* be false. And if the *patient* thinks the idea you're suggesting is false, it *won't work* for him. It loses its dynamic value. For an idea to work and go on working I've got to be convinced it's true. So our whole job is, to find out ideas, governing ideas, which we can be sure *are true*. If we can't we—and you in particular—may as well throw up the sponge.' But there must be a way of finding out *truth*. Well, let's make use of it."

"What *is* the way?" said Miss Sykes.

"Ah! we'd better not embark on that now, had we?"

"Pearls before swine, I suppose!" she sighed.

"Oh, *Malfa!*" cried Miss Silver; so I found that out too.

"Say rather, acorns before angels," I murmured, and bowing, got up to go. I walked home with Mr. Tuke, and the conversation

gave him matter for a paragraph, off which he made half-a-crown, and stood his pal a cinema.

* * * * *

After dinner Captain Blake called.

He was very timid, so I asked him if he'd like some coffee. He refused, of course, but I insisted that it could easily be hotted up, and I reflected it was sure to be so nasty that he'd have no time for any other emotion, and would be normal when he'd finished his cup. So I messed about with the coffee things till we'd got over the first ten minutes; he then drank his, and became neutral; and when he began to smoke he had all his courage, and took the plunge.

"You said I might come and ask you a thing or two, padre," he began.

"Sure. You wanted an explanation about mixed marriages, didn't you?"

"Well—I *did*. But I don't any more. I may as well tell you I've decided to become an R.C."

"Oh. Why?"

"Well, I daresay I'm not telling you anything when I say I'm most awfully struck with Miss Travers; and though it would be a bit of a gulp to become an R.C., what with my parents and all, y'know, I expect it would give me a better chance, y'know, if I was one, and then this mixed-marriage business needn't be gone into at all."

"If you want," said I, "to do exactly the one thing which would absolutely ensure Miss Travers saying No, you suggest to her that you are willing to be an R.C. for her sake."

He looked extremely blank.

"The way," I continued, "to obtain leave for a mixed marriage, is to promise that the children shall be brought up Catholics, and that you won't interfere with your wife's religion; and she promises she'll try in a reasonable way to show you the truth of hers. And the one and only way of becoming a Catholic is to acquire a complete conviction that the Catholic Faith is absolutely true."

"Well," he said, rather glumly, "of course, I haven't gone into these things, but I daresay it's all right."

"You've got to dare to say a lot more than that."

"But look here, padre, I know a whole heap of fellows who become R.C.'s in order to marry; at least I know a couple or so; but you're always hearing about it; you don't mean to tell me it really makes much odds to *them?* They want to please the girl they're in love with; and then they reckon what's good enough for her is good

enough for them. They wouldn't care one way or the other, left to themselves."

"Well, of course, I'd consider that converts *aren't* left to themselves. If they're called to have the Catholic Faith, God intervenes. He can quite well start work upon a man through the instrumentality of a girl, or a friend, or a book, or pretty well anything. I knew a man once who was going on a job to Naples, and thought—God help him!—it would be a sound business proposition if he were the same religion as the natives—out there at least. He made quite a good Catholic in the long run. . . . But you've got to *have the faith*, personal conviction, or whatever phrase you're used to. Else no priest would receive you."

"But surely the priests wink at it now and again? What about these political marriages?"

"Look here," said I, "in any other department of life you wouldn't dream of making that sort of suggestion. It's perfectly astounding to me when I think of the state popular imagination must be in when quite decent folks like you can say that sort of thing to other decent folks, let's hope like me. I remember another man—he hadn't the least spark of Catholic faith in him, and never has had, but his prospective mother-in-law had set her heart on his being a Catholic before he married her daughter, and was chivying him—and at last he came to me and said: 'Look here, padre, I'll tell any old lie you like for the sake of peace. Carry on; you can make me an R.C. right now.' I said: 'If you'd even begun to get hold of the idea of what you're talking about, you'd see that you were insulting your fiancée in supposing she'd like you to tell lies; and insulting the R.C. religion in supposing it would condescend to accept you on the basis of a lie; not to mention your mother-in-law. So don't do it.' I tell you, he was properly relieved!"

"Well," Blake said, rather stiffly, "I didn't quite realize you'd take it like that. Perhaps I'd better apologize."

I laughed.

"Don't take that part too seriously. I know it's the conventional thing to suppose priests are all out fishing for converts and apparently don't much mind how they get 'em. As if it were the priest who stood to gain by getting one, and not the convert."

"But look here, padre, I may as well speak plainly. In my view I'm all right as I am. I don't see how *I'd* gain particularly by becoming an R.C. except for having peace in the house and so on. And, of course, what Orwylstree said had something in

it. Bit awkward if one party goes one way and one the other. But——"

"Wait a minute," I said. "It strikes me you're romping on a bit rapidly. Suppose you became a Catholic as you suggested and then she said No? Where'd *you* be?"

"It's not an idea I like to think of."

"No; but you oughtn't to shut your eyes to the possibility. Where *would* you be?"

"Blest if I know. Make the best of it, I suppose. In short, be pretty well where I am, with a different label on."

"Well, d'you mind my asking, What *are* you?"

"Oh, C. of E. Army C. of E.," he added, with a little laugh.

"What exactly does that mean?"

"It doesn't mean anything *exactly*," he said, rather sharply.

"You mean you were brought up that way?"

"I suppose so. After all, what else *could* you be? Officially, I mean. A man can't very well be a Primitive Methodist, *can* he? Not but what since a different sort of man began being made officers, we've had a Baptist in the mess, I believe. Non-Con., anyway. But good Lord, that's what I say, it made no difference. They were just like the rest of us, as far as *that* went. Hadn't had the same sort of home or schooling as most of us; but his religion didn't make much odds, as far as I could see. Nor yet ours to us, I'm afraid."

"So you think denominations are part of social status?" I asked, grinning a little. "And that provided a fellow's a decent sort of fellow, he can have any religion or none, and no odds made?"

"Well, as I practically said, I haven't *got* a religion, except in the sense all decent men have; and frankly, I don't see what I'd be the better for having one. I'm not a saint; but I've got a conscience, and there are certain things I wouldn't do, or, anyway, I feel a bit disgusted when I do; I reckon I'm pretty average, and I don't set out to be anything else."

"Well, you believe in God?"

"Oh, yes," he said, rather coldly.

"Don't be offended. I always ask that. I've no doubt you do. And I'm not going into all the reasons which prove His existence. But d'you know anything about Him?"

"Oh, I suppose so. I learnt the Bible at school. . . . No. As you were. *Can* one know anything about Him? I don't see how."

"Well, you can. But anyway; d'you know anything or, if you like, *feel* anything about Him so as to make any practical difference?

Is there any one thing you do or don't do just because of God? D'you keep off adultery or perjury or stealing because you feel He'd object? D'you do your best for these fellows at the Town Hall, even when you've got a liver and feel like cursing the lot of them, because He orders you to be just?"

"Don't suppose so."

"D'you ever say any prayers?"

"Not since I left school."

"Well, I bet you do. I don't mean kneeling down and reciting long prayers, or any set prayers. But d'you ever pray on your own?"

"I go to church on and off when I'm at home."

"No, no. Not church. But you occasionally *speak to God?*"

"Well, possibly."

"What d'you say?"

He moved restlessly.

"Look here, this is getting a bit intimate."

"Sorry, Blake. But I consider we aren't casual acquaintances any more. I'm not meaning to be intrusive. I perfectly well understand when a man's sensitive too. Listen. I'll tell you a thing. During the war you prayed when you had wind up. But not only then. In fact, you almost felt you'd be a hypocrite to pray much then. Still, you did. But there are moments when you feel so fearfully fit and bucked with life, especially at rather unusual moments, and when there's a sort of sense of *purity* about, like a very clear summer morning when, by a fluke, you've been up, and you somehow feel God's at the back of all, and you feel He's jolly *good*. . . . And, similarly, I expect you've once or twice been so up against it that you've almost angrily appealed to God to lend a hand. . . . And, finally, you've prayed a bit more since you've been in love; and I daresay on other occasions when you've been in love. . . ."

He smiled quite pleasantly.

"Well, I'm not always falling in and out of it, exactly. . . . Still, I own to being a bit susceptible. But it's queer your guessing it took me that way—made me say my prayers, I mean. . . . By Jove, haven't I asked, once or twice, that she should—er—like me a bit! I say, padre," said the young man quite anxiously, "should you say I had the ghost of a chance?"

"Oh—well, you know! I've seen you together exactly once!"

"Well, will you put in a word for me if she—if you—if there's an opportunity?"

"Ah! You mustn't ask me to play Providence! It's not my

line, honest! And are you asking me to cut out my friend Reggie Orwylstree? Suppose he asked me the same thing? He hasn't, I promise you—but——"

"D'you suppose——" he interrupted. "I say—is Orwylstree—oh damn!"

Then he apologized for his language, and murmured something about my "cloth." . . .

"Look here," I said. "Let's get back a moment. I assure you Orwylstree's never mentioned the subject, and if he did I'd say the same as I do to you. But now listen. Why d'you apologize to me for saying 'damn'?"

"Oh well, y'know, parson, you know. Leastways a padre, anyhow. Suppose it's much the same thing . . . don't want to shock anyone."

"No. But d'you consider 'damn' wrong?"

"Can't say I do. Still, well, one has to be a bit careful before padres, I suppose. Though——" he broke off.

"Now, look here. Either it's wrong, and you oughtn't to say it, parson or no parson; or it's not, and then they oughtn't to be shocked. Though, really, even without any army experience, I should say parsons would be kept pretty busy if they had to be shocked every time they heard 'damn' said."

"*You* don't consider it wrong?"

"Wrong? Well, it's a word, merely, isn't it? It has no meaning. Anyway, I don't understand the idea of being shocked at words, merely! I might dislike a word, or even object to it if it had an objectionable meaning. But shocked? To be shocked implies being unpleasantly surprised. I'd be shocked if you lost a couple of stone in the next week. I'd be shocked if you told me you had a wife already, and yet were courting Barbara! But swearing, on the whole, is a matter of taste. Sometimes disgustingly bad taste. . . . Now blasphemy, that's a different story. I loathe it inexpressibly. But what I'm getting at is, if you and I are ever to get any forrarder we've got to cut out all these frills and conventions and thinking things'll shock me because I wear what you call 'cloth' . . ., and not because they're wrong in themselves. Absolute sincerity, Blake, or we shall be at cross-purposes all the while. But I'll take sincerity for granted from now on, and we shall say to each other what we *really* think about *real* things. That all right? No half-beliefs and half-disbeliefs. If possible, we'll get right back to the fundamental stuff. But don't have wind up! I gather you've not much use for parsons?"

"Well—to tell you the truth—well, I don't honestly see what they're *for*, y'know. I suppose you've got to have 'em to baptize you—though—well, it'd be rum not to have been baptized, though what exactly the point of it is, I don't know. And you require 'em for marriages and funerals, though why *parsons*, again I don't know. Any of your pals'd be only too glad to say a prayer over you when you were being put away. But they seem to require 'em for marriages, and floating round hospitals, and to take Church parades and so on—though look here, padre, if we're not to be conventional, what *can* be more conventional than a church parade? Make it optional, and not a man would go."

"They all say that. But I'll tell you a yarn about parsons. It's become famous; but I go guarantee for it. I was most meekly sitting in my corner of a railway carriage, most unprovocative, I assure you—when a greasy individual opposite me fixed me for about a minute and then said suddenly: 'Parsons is bloody!' I was so taken aback that I said, 'There's bloodier!' *He* was so astonished that he said, 'Well, I'm damned!' And *I* said, 'Not yet!'"

He yelled with laughter.

"Four words! Not so bad, was it? If one had had time to think one would have made a mess of it. The whole carriage rocked with delight, and the man rolled himself up in his *Mirror* and I hugged myself all the way home."

"Say what you will," said he, "people are more scared of a parson than a baby. You're awkward when they come to dinner; same at tennis parties; same anywhere. Pity they're so *black*. Sheer sight of a long black coat puts the wind up me. And it's just the same when they're R.C.'s—not that I've seen many. Bit worse, if anything. Mysterious, y'know. Different somehow. One half expects 'em to talk Latin at you suddenly, or burn you at the stake or something. But I expect there are good sorts among 'em, same as elsewhere. In fact, I know there are. Both our padres in France were damned good sorts. Sorry!"

"I thoroughly agree," said I. "I could cap any instance of the decency of Anglican parsons, and Nonconformists too, that you might offer me. But, on the whole, you feel they aren't *natural*, don't you—I mean *any* black-coated cleric of whatever denomination—and that you aren't able to be natural either while they're there?"

"That's it. Have to be on one's best behaviour. Very good for us, probably."

" It isn't, if it's resentful and not genuine. Well, listen. We've had a longish yarn, and I don't mind if you get nothing from it, except that nothing matters to start with, except absolute mental sincerity. I'm perfectly sure you'll come back for some more, won't you ?"

" I should hope so. Tell me some more yarns like that one, and I'll come every night !"

" Oh, no. That was unique. Nothing so artistic could happen twice. But make up your mind that this huge fact, God, is as real a fact as that table," said I, hitting it, " or your food, or *Barbara*. And you don't tell her lies, or think lies about her, nor yet mere conventionalisms; but you're sincere all through."

" By Jove, I am," he said; " I'd kick myself if I wasn't."

" Right," said I. " Then go on your knees very sincerely before God to-night for a minute or two, even if you don't say anything. Take your hat *right* off. . . ."

After that we talked about indifferent things till he went away.

Chapter V

TWO or three days after this I was waiting to cross Victoria Street just by the station, and reflecting with a certain melancholy on tea at the Ladies' Minerva Club, to which I had been bidden by Lady Olivia Binny, the well-known West-End Democrat; she wanted to show me the MS. of her youngest niece's collected poems, of which *Little Laughing Larches* was said to display a truly mystical perception of the Underlying Reality, and, if I could find an agreeable publisher, Lady Olivia was sure the book would sell extremely well. Lady Olivia had herself supplied the child's illustrations and designed a cover, representing a little girl kissing a larch-tree. "I," Lady Olivia had written to me, "have merely contributed the *craftsmanship*, the mere mechanical *externalization*. The work is really *Flora's*; the inwardness, the Thing, is hers. But I have been careful not to be *too* . . . expert! The Thought was —*great*, and yet it was a child's. The pictures must express that. . ."

I was roused from these meditations by a devastating whistle, which held up the traffic, I am sure, from Shepherd's Bush to Whitechapel; and lo! Mr. Francis Newnes, ex-Corporal, in heated altercation with a policeman.

"There ain't no law agin it, as I've heard on," he was saying. "Carn't a bloke whistle if 'e likes, street or no street? Carn't 'e give vent to 'is innercent light-heartedness? This ain't no funeral, as I knows on. This ain't Westminster Abbey. When a bloke sees a bloke as he's a pal on, an' is full of joy an' rapture consequently, an' wishful to attrack 'is attention like, 'oo's to prevent 'im whistlin'? 'Oo's to do it? I ain't imitated none of your bloomin' cop's calls, I ain't. Tain't my fault if the buses stops—— Well, an' 'ow *are* you," he broke off, shaking hands with incredible violence, for by now I had crossed to the island.

"As you appear to know this man, sir," said the policeman to me, "I'll be glad if you takes him elsewheres."

"Old army acquaintance, Sergeant," said I, forming a rapid

opinion. "Knew him in hospital. . . . Hope you prefer your present job to a couple of years ago . . . ?"

He grinned, saluted, and I piloted the Corporal back into Wilton Road.

"Where'll we go ?" he said, excitedly.

"Wait a moment; I must 'phone to somebody to postpone a tea."

He whistled.

"A lady ?" he enquired.

"Oh yes !"

"She'll never forgive yer !" he said, with intense earnestness, and stood still in the middle of the pavement, clutching my arm.

She never did; still, as I told him, it was worth the sacrifice.

I telephoned, somewhat distracted by hearing Frank Newnes, just as I closed the little door, declare in a hoarse whisper to an elderly flower-seller:

"Goin' to tea with a lady, an' turns 'er down for Mr. Francis Newnes, late 'Olloway, an' Corporal in——"

What further he said I didn't hear; but he must have so touched the heart of the flower-lady that she presented both of us, on my exit, with a buttonhole, to my great embarrassment.

"What *you* want, Frank," said I, looking at him, "is a meal. Choose a likely-looking place."

We found an eating-house, almost empty at that hour, sat down, and he perused the list.

"Hossidges ?" said he. "N-a-ow. Heard too much about 'em. Quiver an' achin' ? Ar. 'Ad *'im* yesterday. Gripe an' bunions—— Knows too much about *'im*, leastways the trimmin's. . . ."

"Frank, if you go on like that, I shan't be able to eat anything myself. Look here. Have some steak and onions, and I'll have sausages. I like 'em. But don't attack my imagination; and I think you might modestly convey my buttonhole to the young lady who'll wait on us, because I can't wear it."

(I may add that he covered me with confusion, while he presented it, by saying it was a present from the reverend gent to a good girl. Fortunately she tossed her head and said she might give it to her girl-friend; but she was quite pleased, really, and the meal was excellent.)

"Now," said I, "give an exact account of all you've been doing since we met."

"Well," he said, "I wrote to say 'ow I done cinema-shouter for a bit, though I reckon you thought it were a West-end lay, it bein'

be'ind Commercial Road in reality, a littl'un, where there's shoutin' allowed an' coaxin' the public in like. But that weren't much. Then my pal as I were stayin' with previous to this 'ere movie-stunt, 'e gets me a job drivin' a van for parcels like; deliverin', for a millinery firm, Oates's; don't know if you know it; millinery an' 'aberdashery an' wot not. That were a fair job, long as it lasted."

"Why didn't it last?"

"Why, they reckoned to send me to a branch at Berkhamsted. Gawd 'elp us! Berk-ham-sted! Now you look 'ere, Far-ther. First rule in the game is: It's got to be London. London every time, or I snuffs it. See Francis Newnes of 'Olloway in Berkhamsted? Pine away, I would, an' become a interestin' angel like as you used to talk on. No. London for me, an' when they mentions Berkhamsted, I faints away where I stands, an' then I 'ops it, an' never goes back to Messrs. Oates, not nohow. Well, then I picks up with this 'ere coffee-house stunt, wot only staffs itself with disabled men, an' *that* were all right for a time, seein' as 'ow I could sit on a stool 'arf of the hours, there bein' no one comin' an' me havin' to 'ave a 'arf-time sitting job; that's rule number two."

"Well, why didn't *that* go on!"

"Oh Far-ther!" said he, very plaintively. "Now do you *see* me at it? See me settin' on a stool an' 'andin' out cups o' coffee, one *per* hour, to respec'ble folks, or tea most like, not to call it *tea*, an' save in the evenin', just as we're goin' to close, never a soul wot'll appreciate me conversation save now an' again a taxi-driver wot's in the Salvation Army simultaneous. Now if it had been one of them coffee-stalls at 'Yde Park Corner like, open all night, an' just wot's wanted for—well, *you* knows for 'oo—the early mornin' worm, anyways, an' the fly-by-nights wot cops 'em—now that was *me;* but they're 'ard to come by."

"So you chucked it?"

"Say rather it chucks me. I won't lie to you, nor would I. I 'as me couple, one day, feelin' I'd go roarin' mad if I didn't. An' a nice little bust it were. An' drunk I was, I'm not denyin' it. An' talk a bit I did, I make no doubt; an' cop a p'liceman under the chin with a saucer I make no doubt I did; which it were required fer the sauce 'e was out-pourin' onto me, it sure were; not but wot I give it 'im back with a ounce or two o' pepper added an' I loves to think of it; but they fires me, after that, an' 'ere I am."

"Where's here?"

"Well, I has a stall in 'Addock Road: Isle o' Dogs way—meat-

stall. But *that's* only good o' nights, Saturdays specially. But you look 'ere. 'Tain't wot it was. Wot can you give 'em for twopence nowadays? Nothink. Why, the scraps an' skins alone comes to more nor twopence, prices bein' wot they are, an' it's the bone as counts. An' when I tried to 'elp it out a bit with stale buns an' bits as you gets off the eat 'ouses day before, the bun-stalls objects, an' says that's their monopoly. An' when me leg 'urts, shout I cannot. Not to rival 'im wot's opposite side o' the road as was A.S.C. I make no doubt, or anyways, never stopped one. 'Aven't got the 'eart for shoutin'. Want to be let alone, more like, an' curl up in me corner. Shoutin'? Naow."

"What d'you do during the day-time?"

"Parcels. Open a door or two. 'Ave a bit of a gamble now an' again, an' gets me gate-money for the football. But all the places is monopoly, down to the opening of taxi-doors."

At this point the neighbouring Cathedral came into my mind. He had practically finished his meal.

"Frank," I said, "whenever I come to London, if I'm in this neighbourhood, I look in at our Cathedral, round the corner. I always go to see how the mosaics are getting on. Besides, it's a great place, and I like it."

"Very good," said he; "toddle along."

But at the steps in Ambrosden Avenue, he halted, and said: "Don't be too long, Far-ther!"

"Well," I said, "you aren't going to stop out there?"

"Sure thing," said he; "you don't see me comin' into these grand places with clothes like this on me? If I'd known I was to meet you, I'd have got meself up in me nifty blue serge an' me clarssy yellow boots, and me bowler 'at."

Frank was wearing no collar, but a large handkerchief knotted round his neck; and his frayed coat cuffs had worked themselves so far up that quite three inches of his extraordinary tattooing (which began on his chest and between his shoulder-blades and came right down to his wrists) were visible. So I concluded he wore a sleeveless vest, only, beneath his coat.

"No one worries here about clothes," I said, "or shouldn't do. Anyway, who's going to have the cheek to criticize? You're my friend, aren't you, and you're along with me. Where I go, you can. If anyone makes remarks, you'll hear me make some; that I promise you. But the point is, this isn't a grand place. Or if it is, it's because it's God's house and He's good enough to let the two of us into it."

He followed me rather moodily.

But in that enormous place he was unable to maintain the mood. In that exempted air, the associations of "outside" dissolved. That was always the first impression. From the massive, turbid air of London, swirling with energies and passion, this great hollow of silence and immobility had been exempted; it was a cathedral-under-the-sea; a church in the mountain's heart; true sanctuary. Up to its walls, and on them, and down upon its roofs, pressed and strained all the dense work of London; the interwoven effort; the impulse, irresistible, out there, of humanity; packed thoughts and judgments, condensed endeavour; but here, all had been flung back by these vaults and these straight walls; here was an interspace, a vacuum, where we might be admitted and yet draw breath, living otherwise.

Frank stood still, automatically, at the bottom, looking with anxious, unaccustomed eyes, up the enormous nave, flooded with faint fog, offering but few outlines for his eyes to fasten on—a dim altar, built beneath great columns; a gigantic, shadowy cross, that floated dark and high. I could see him sink, almost, into a dream, the dream of relief that comes when pressures are gone; loads removed; a peace, in which thought had no more to be restless, nothing had to be *done*.

But after a few moments you became aware that the cathedral was living its own life; this was no vacuum; this, if any, was the focus of force; this was the reality, sending off waves of energy through the shadowy unstable elements that tumultuously surged outside it, else, without form and void. An incomparable life, generating its own low thunderous voices, luminous with what was neither night nor day; a life indeed that seemed to me not just diffused, but having its own heart, welling up most of all over there, at the left, far down the church, where a few lights twinkled and you could see, now, a kneeling blackness, worshippers looking all one way. . . .

Obedient to I know not what instinct I led the Corporal away from that, to the right, where even the brilliant adornment of these chapels remained veiled and indistinguishable at this hour, just shadows upon shadows, not interfered with by the myriad starry points of gold.

We went right up to the Lady Chapel and sat down on two chairs near the back of it.

He let himself sink heavily and sighed. He was certainly very tired.

I let him remain in silence as long as he wished.

Then he said:

"I was silly about them clothes. I ain't got no blue serge, nor I ain't got nothing but this cap. I were ashamed of lettin' on to you about it—I——"

But his words broke off, and he remained silent once more, held hypnotized by a candle near to the Lady Altar.

After a pause he said:

"Reckon there's another thing I'll tell you. That there cinema shouting wasn't the first thing I did after leavin' me pal; that were O.K.; I did stay with that pal of mine you knows on for a bit, an' we 'ad a good time, but it stands to reason *that* bit o' money wouldn't last; so we goes down to Brighton an' we starts singin' on the beach, reckonin' on its bein' good sport an' bringin' in enough to starve on. But it's truth I'm tellin' you; I didn't go down a bit, not me songs or patter, I'm meanin'. Odd, ain't it? Now in the army it was me for them, every time. Concerts, but still more the sing-songs wot happened informal, or as *you* knows, in the wards. Yarns by the 'undred I 'ad; an' songs; an' there was a good few as could be sung anywheres, in public like, no matter 'oo's listenin'. Al-ways went down. Always welcome. Reckon there's something special in the army. Ready to accept cheerful, the lads is. Provided you knows wot's wot and aren't offensive, which you soon picks up 'ow not to be, pals they all is, an' chums up automatic and accepts wot you 'ands out real friendly. That's wot I found, anyways. And 'avin' a bit more cheek than most, I reckon, I kept on at it an' put it down to me own superior cleverness an' winnin' ways. Wrote meself down irresistible, I did. . . . But on that beach—course they'd gather round, an' they'd laugh a bit; but then slide along, never a thank you, never a shout to come an' 'ave a friendly one; or rare as honesty, *that* was. I reckon there weren't nothin' special about me after all. Just one more wounded sojer, cadgin' coins an' too lazy to work. . . . An' that's where I first struck monopolies. Reckon the beach should be free, if nowhere else. But never a bit of it. Marked out, it were, 'xcept where no one goes. Shoved off, you was, fer plantin' yerself on the next man's claim. . . ."

"That'll have disheartened you a lot?"

"Well, I keeps comin' up like the cork you called me. Down I wouldn't stay, nor will. But there's something changed like in me. When I think of 'ow I shouted to fetch 'em in to that there Spinx I told you on, or even for me old tripe barrow—why, it was *me*, the show was; 'come an' listen to Kid Newnes,' the sayin' was; but

now——? Love you! it's 'ollow like, me shoutin' is, something's gone out of me, an' 'e won't come back."

"Don't you really want to get something a bit more settled?"

"Well, *could* I?" he said. "Money? I can't keep it. And you wants money to get anything worth 'avin' on your own."

"Yes, but need it be on your own? Won't you have to get a job under someone who'll certainly be master, and you work—with him, of course, but—well, take orders!"

"Ar," he said; "but could I? *Could* I?"

"You did in the army."

"And if it wasn't for me leg wouldn't I go straight back to it."

"Well, shift the spirit you liked there into civilian conditions."

"Can't be done. The army's spoilt me for everything *but* army. Restless I was before, in a way, but put me 'ole 'eart into all I did; an' I'm restless still, but I can't put me 'eart into nothing."

"But you can't possibly go through life like that. You can't *make* a life out of that. I'd give you a lot of scope for variety and change, but you must have *some* thread running through it to hold it together."

"Why?"

"Well, you won't always be able to hop from one thing to another. You'll grow old. You'll want something permanent to give you the necessary foundation!"

"Ar. Don't talk about growin' old!"

"Well, but you *will*. At least I hope so."

"An' I 'opes *not*, not if it's to mean slavery. Ow! don't I feel 'appy," said he, wriggling his shoulders, "when I knows I'm not tied down by hours and wages an' wot not, not even to a 'ouse, but doss where handy. See me marchin' down the street, limp or no limp, feelin' meself naked-like, ready to fly like, fly without a aeroplane, but me—jest *me*——" said he, in ecstasy.

After a moment he resumed.

"Not but what I *am* a simple innercent kid, or was, though me thinkin' I knew the world backwards! Remember me askin' you if you'd come an' see me in 'Olloway? Thinkin' as 'ow all I'd 'ave to do would be to 'op out of 'ospital straight into them old digs? Never so much as occurred to me they'd not be there for me. Nothing there; nothing the same; not the landlady, not the rents, not me friends. An' not me. Changed it all is, an' me with it. Brought down a lot, I am."

I looked up to where, through an arch, I could just see the great

crucifix, pale now, with a slight reflected light, and forming a high, uplifted point to which all the lines of the Cathedral seemed to converge. I stared and stared at the Crucifix, and since I knew it well, I felt that I could see the gaunt rigid figure upon it, nailed, immovable, pierced right through, scarcely a man at all, scarcely a dead slave . . .

"Wot are you thinkin' of?" said Frank.

"I think I was thinking you might have to be brought down all the way—right down—before you can start on the life I so much hope for you."

"*Was* you," he said, with mock indignation. "You was? Well, I won't 'ave it. Tell you wot I've bin thinkin' in this rum old church of yours, though Mr. Francis Newnes inside of a church is the rummest start of any. Time was when I looked forward to 'avin' a little pub. of me own, why, 'ave it in the country, even, I would 'ave, I was that set upon it. But I reckon that's far away. Now, wot I might 'ave in the corner of me eye, p'raps and p'raps not, is a little fried fish shop down Stepney way, somethink special an' out of the ordinary an' worthy of *me*, me not bein' ordinary, as you *'ave* to own. I might even see 'ow to raise the necessary, borrowin' a bit off one or two I knows on, an' payin' gradual——" his eyes lit up; he saw the flaming window of his shop, aglow through the Cathedral.

"Ow's that for settled life an' the golden thread?" he asked, rather too loud for where we were.

"I don't like the borrowing," I said. "But—well, anything to give you some sort of a purpose in life! Else we'll have you going to bits, and that won't do. Now look, Frank, come and I'll give you a glass of beer, as it's late enough by now, and then I have to be off. I have to see a man at dinner and catch the 9.30 back to Wilchurch."

We parted soon after that, he swearing every oath that he'd write and let me know how he was thriving.

Chapter VI

I WAS on my way to Barbara's birthday party when I met Blake. "Blake!" I cried, "for Heaven's sake come along with me to the Travers's. It's Barbara's birthday; there'll be a mob, but if you and I go together, we can support one another in the background. *I've* got to go."

"As a matter of fact I was going there myself," said he. "But if there's going to be a crowd . . ."

"Well, we'll back one another up. We needn't talk to anyone. But wait a minute! Old Lady Sophia'll be there. Lady Sophia Lindale—Barbara's great-aunt. She's rather terrifying, but as good as gold, and she'll love you if you stand up to her. . . . I'll introduce you."

"Oh, Lord," he groaned; "this is awful! I'm not good at great-aunts, and anyhow, I tell you I'm getting downright self-conscious, keeping on going to that house! Keep thinking they'll be thinking —oh, all sorts of things," he wound up lamely.

"People don't think about one. They just notice one vaguely and then float off to something else. Most chastening. 'Oh, here's —er—Captain Blake, isn't it? I believe he manages all the unemployed or something. What a lot of soldiers there are about still! By the way, how *is* your dear nephew?'"

"Yes," he said, indignantly; "Or, 'Here's that Roman priest. Extraordinary how priests work their way in everywhere. . . . Of course, the Travers's are so *kind*. But, talking of priests, the dear Archdeacon said to me yesterday . . .'"

"Quite so. You obviously know all about it."

"But I very much hope," he said, with a portentous sigh, "Miss Travers notices me a little more than that."

"She falls," I said, "into obvious ecstasy on sight of you."

"No, no, I say! Look here, you mustn't pull my leg about Miss Travers!"

I grinned and squeezed his elbow, and we arrived thus at the Travers's door.

The room was full, and at first I thought I knew no one. However, there sat Lady Sophia, bolt upright on a sort of throne, occupied with a charming and excessively cheeky boy of seventeen, called Cecil Calthrop, who was probably the only person in the room, except Barbara, who could manage her. What Barbara did with Blake, I couldn't quite see; I know she swept him from me, and then steered me miles away towards a very hatted and pearly lady whom I didn't know, though, when Barbara murmured introductions, I thought she said we'd 'met'; and then she left me with a glint of obvious malice in her eye.

The lady looked annoyed, and went on looking it. I could see she took me for one of the thronging Wilchurch curates, and gradually I realized that she was wanting, inside, to get attached to Lady Sophia's group, and I was preventing her.

She began to talk very rapidly of the miseries of the Wilchurch climate, and how she wouldn't dream of being out of London just then, if she hadn't felt she really ought to take pity on her husband, for a change, though really she had been thinking of the Riviera, "though nowadays," she said, fingering her pearls, "everything is so fearfully expensive! But perhaps you don't *know* the Riviera?" She looked sideways at me, lifting her eyebrows.

I murmured something.

"Of course," she went on, "I simply couldn't live without it; but I daresay you wouldn't enjoy it. *I* go at all seasons! At the very time the Travers's were at Lourdes last year, was at Monte! Wasn't that terrible, padre?"

Her voice was shrill, and carried. Cecil Calthrop caught her eye.

"Why?" called he across the room. "Had you got into trouble there or something, Mrs. Vale?"

"I thought, of course, the padre might *object* to my being at Monte."

"Far from it," I said, fervently.

"Oh, it's quite as bad as it's painted," she said, piqued, and suspicious of Cecil's chuckle.

"I'm told," said Lady Sophia, "that all those lovely places are *quite* spoilt."

She said it to Cecil, but Mrs. Vale felt herself admitted into the circle, and changed her chair to one on my left so that she could speak more easily.

"Of course, the poor dear Theatre-people——" she began.

"I was not speaking of theatre folks, my dear," said Lady Sophia. "They have the right to be vulgar, and so they aren't. Besides, my kinsman, St. Ermyn, married a charming girl from the variety stage. I meant people who have no right to be vulgar."

"But one should be grateful to them," cried Cecil. "Theatre folks are so discreet nowadays that if the others didn't look so theatrical, no one would know which was which."

She smiled at him indulgently.

"We have abdicated," she said. "Pleasure for its own sake is usually vulgar. Luxury for its own sake always is. *We* were brought up to be able to use luxury and to do without it. The ball-rooms were gorgeous, but the bedrooms—oh dear *me!* Fires, my dear? Not we!"

"A splendid Sparta," he murmured.

"What I disliked at Monte Carlo," said I to Mrs. Vale, who after a gasp, looked almost respectfully at me, "was the children. Curled and frizzed and dollified until they weren't human. That, and the pigeon shooting."

She recovered herself.

"There was plenty of skill in the pigeon shooting," she declared, "though perhaps you wouldn't notice that. Do you shoot? Or perhaps you don't—er—approve of sport. I notice clergymen often *don't*."

"Perhaps not," I said. "I don't know many; but the last bull-fight I was at——"

This time she really looked astonished.

"I confess it was also the first. Certainly I hated it, though it was most skilful. . . . At Nimes, you know, but Spanish matadors and bulls—but perhaps you don't go in for bull-fighting."

"I've certainly never seen a bull-fight."

"Neither should I, if I hadn't been hung up there on my way to Lourdes."

"Dear me! Did you go to Lourdes, too? I'd have thought you—— Oh well, after all, I've been myself and I confess I don't believe in Lourdes, either."

"What do you mean by 'either'?"

"Well, I suppose I *ought* to—but *you*——"

"If you ought to—well, you *ought* to! But why ought you to? And why oughtn't I?"

"Of course," she said, "I make a point of never dragging religion

into general conversation. But personally I'm a Catholic. *Roman* Catholic. In fact, a convert," she said firmly.

"Oh—well—I'm a Catholic priest myself after all!"

"Oh—High Church I suppose. But—well, I own I'm broad-minded, but I can't allow you're *priests*, you know; oh no! But do let's talk of something else."

"But I assure you I'm the genuine article! Roman, Papist, black as black!"

"But—good heavens! I quite understood—well—I jumped to the conclusion, when Barbara Travers introduced you, you were one of the Cathedral clergy!"

"Do I *look* it? Nothing so respectable."

"I'm afraid I don't know the Catholic clergy here. I—well, I *am* here very little. You're *always* here?"

"Except when he's at Monte or bull-fighting," said Cecil.

"Oh do please let's talk of something else," cried Mrs. Vale.

"Well," said I, "if we mustn't talk about religion or roulette, what *shall* we talk about?"

"My dear Father," said Lady Sophia, "do *not* let us talk about anything else for a moment, because, my dear," she said to Mrs. Vale, "since we clearly *may* mention—ah!—roulette in general conversation, why not our much more dignified religion?"

"I always feel it's somehow rather bad taste——" she began.

Lady Sophia's eyebrows went up. Then she relented, but dangerously.

"Like talking about one's ancestors," she said. "Or one's pearls. *I* see!"

"Of course, it's very wonderful to feel about it like that," said Mrs. Vale, wishing she hadn't put her necklace on at tea-time. "I do myself sometimes—I remember I did when I was first received and someone told me I'd joined the religion of the scullery. . . ."

"So they did me," said Cecil; "and next time I called I rang the area bell and sent up my card from the kitchen—wouldn't come up till I was fetched."

'Sculleries," said Lady Sophia, "are often cleaner than the drawing-room. It is true I don't often visit them, but I dare say there's not much to choose between sculleries and carpenters' shops. *My* first ancestor did carpentering, my dear."

"But *how* interesting," began Mrs. Vale. Then she saw, said "Oh!" and collapsed.

" *My* spiritual mamma," said Cecil, to the rescue, " was a quite too charming demoiselle in a confectioner's at Havre."

" My *dear* boy !" said Lady Sophia, tapping his arm.

" Sure thing, *ma tante*. I adore coffee fondants and till I'd set going a really passionate *affaire* she wouldn't pick 'em out for me. But afterwards all went well. . . . Then one Sunday she took me to High Mass at St. Michel's. I didn't like the High Mass, but there was a warm corner in that church where I could go and eat my fondants and contemplate a certain—er—statue. It was symbolical. Which'd I choose ? I confronted the two—er—ideals. Which'd I concentrate on ? Fondants ? or the other ? I decided fondants were too—well, *fondant* as a basis for life. I substituted coffee walnuts. Still too sweet. Remarkable chapel, that. Sacred Heart chapel, Lady Sophia. On the left at the bottom. "

" My dear child," she cried. " Havre doesn't attract me. But you must have been a mere infant then, so that I needn't worry about *that* flirtation !"

" Oh, but think of my appalling career ever since, godmamma !"

" I think of it, godson, with the greatest satisfaction."

" I touches my cap," said he. " But the real shove was given me by another girl in a little music hall in the docks there, a bit later. Some music hall, godmamma ! Most maritime ! All sailors but me. I expected to be knifed, or doped, at the least. I'd ordered coffee. What a hope ! Coffee nothing ! I made 'em break the neck of a brandy-bottle so that I could be sure what I was drinking hadn't been tampered with. I poured the coffee out on to the floor. And then I made the girl tell me what the medal she was wearing was, and it was Our Lady of Lourdes, and she began to cry and poured out *her* drink on to the floor. Such a mess ! So I went to Lourdes like the rest of us, apparently, and that finished me."

" And that reminds me," said Lady Sophia, determined to change the subject, " and why *don't* you believe in Lourdes, my dear, if you think you ought to ?"

" Oh—well, after all, one needn't, *need* one ? And I live *quite* among non-Catholics, you know, and one wants to show one's broad-minded, and not to make things *harder* for them . . . and, well, I did go to Lourdes once; we were staying at Pau, and motored over with the Ecclesleighs. But I didn't see anything *like* a miracle, and I didn't enjoy it—all the horrid crowds ! So I made dear Lord Eck and Ecclesleigh take me off to Gavarnie for the day."

" I bet Hughie wanted to stop at Lourdes," said Cecil.

"Don't know him well enough to judge," said Lady Sophia. "But his great-aunt, Susan, was a nice woman, though prehistoric. But, of course, my dear, there's nothing quite so easy as not to see what you're not looking for!"

"I'm *always* seeing things I don't look for," said Cecil, "or even *at*."

"Don't be modern and paradoxical, child!" said she. "Sometimes you're very annoying. Because, after all, there's something in what you say."

"But isn't there something, too, in the modern instinct?" said Mrs. Vale, who really was not lacking in pluck. "That things like miracles are *out of date?*"

"There's a deal more in the Catholic instinct," said Lady Sophia, "that they're neither in nor out. God doesn't trouble about dates."

But the room was thinning. Mrs. Vale got up to go.

"I'm afraid I've shocked you terribly, Lady Sophia," she said, as she shook hands, "but I *have* got my poor little principles."

Lady Sophia swallowed her rage at the idea that anyone short of the Queen could shock her, in favour of this assertion of principle, and said good-bye most pleasantly, and added:

"I do hope, my dear, you'll look me up in Curzon Street, if you hear I'm in London. We don't entertain at Linborough since my nephew's death. My second nephew, Odo, who's now Lindisfarne, is very seldom there. But in London, *do* come. *Not* Mondays, unless you want a crowd. Any other day, if you'll take pity on an old woman. . . . Good-bye!"

Mrs. Vale retired, walking upon air.

"By no means a bad woman," said Lady Sophia, when all our little group had gone. "But *very* silly."

"She represses excellent instincts," said Cecil, "under second-rate conventions. Hence her absurd behaviour."

"Imp!" cried Lady Sophia. "What are you talking about? And what should you know about it? She might be your mother twice over."

"I doubt it," said he. "Barely thirty-five."

"Detestable child," she cried, "hold your tongue. Barbara, my dear, is she a *friend* of yours?"

"She showed great pluck," said Barbara, "when she became a Catholic. It certainly did seem like the scullery for her. She knew no one. And nobody seemed to want to know *her*. I can't

imagine a conversion more an affair of conviction, for I don't think she was ever—well, dévote."

"And I could tell you young people," said Mr. Travers, who came in after the guests had gone, for functions tired him nowadays, "that she's stuck to it in harder conditions than you'd probably guess. I respect Mrs. Vale, in spite of her silly little ways. She's still cut off from a lot, and apt to fight for crumbs."

"*I'll* see to it that she doesn't have to do that now," said Lady Sophia. "She'll respond. She's second-rate now, but she'll become first-rate when once she *meets* the first-rate."

Cecil whistled.

"And the first-rate's *you*, venerable lady?" he asked, almost too cheekily.

Lady Sophia levelled her brows at him.

"I'm proud," she said, "of all the breeding God has given me. The best of my breeding has been the Catholic religion. I've had several generations of other good breeding, too. And I'm proud of the lot. She shall learn to be proud of her Catholicism for its own sake, even if I have to use my other assets as a make-weight. And she shall learn to stop propitiating upstarts by petty little broad-mindednesses and finicky unorthodoxy. Yes, I'm very proud of the goodness of God's gifts to me—and not conceited like you, Cecil Calthrop," she added, smiling suddenly.

"Oh, not *conceited*," he cried. "Don't say that. A little vain, perhaps. Childishly, but quite charmingly. Give me time, I'll grow out of it. Meanwhile I, too, has me principles. . . ."

"I've never heard such a lot about principles," said Blake, abruptly, "till I came to this house! I'm sure I understood what she said about instincts better. I should say that if your instincts are tolerably all right, as Mr. Calthrop said, what more do you want?"

"Tut, tut," said Lady Sophia. "You've got to have a skeleton, though Mrs. Vale would say it was bad taste to talk about it. But you've got to have it. Such a lot of young people are filleted nowadays! Though I shouldn't like even this household to walk about with all its ribs sticking out."

"You could hook your umbrella," said Cecil, "on my ribs."

"I value it too much," she said. "But with all your faults, I wouldn't call you *ribby*."

"Padre," said Blake, "help me out a bit. I bet you that decent average men, real good men, don't know much about their prin-

ciples ! But just follow instinct—feeling. And keep that sound by mixing with other decent men. Follow their conscience. A sort of general decent conscience. What's conscience but instinct, after all ?"

" A lot," I said. " But I refuse to talk about conscience in a drawing-room. As Mrs. Vale would say, it isn't *done*. I am a shy Britisher."

" But I ought to have an answer."

" The answer," said Barbara, " is in Cecil's chapel at Havre."

Cecil had shamelessly helped himself to a surviving coffee-éclair, but this statement so startled him that he pinched that collapsible cake harder than he meant to, and a jet of cream shot forth from either end.

Amid the turmoil, Blake and I escaped.

" What *did* she mean by that last remark?" he said, when we got outside.

" D'you think we're all mad ?" I asked.

" Not *mad*," he said, " but really a bit queer. I'm sure I didn't understand any of you. Mrs. Vale. Is she what you call a good Catholic ? I'd have said she was just a worldly sort of snob, and if you met her at Monte—well, you'd *see* things ! And does that young blighter, Calthrop, mean himself to be taken seriously ? Either he's bluffing, or he's a bit of a rip, *I* should say, and if that's so, I consider it irreverent to say all he *did* say about High Mass and that chapel and—look here, what *did* Miss Travers mean ?"

" And expect you find it hard to reconcile Lady Sophia's religious belief with her very obvious great-lady-ishness ?"

" Oh well, she's another generation."

" But she's as alert and interested as ever she was ! And really she's very humble. She was thinking how she could help Mrs Vale all the time. And she's done a lot for Calthrop."

" Young blighter," he repeated.

" Well, listen. The point really is this: What would he and Mrs. Vale be without their religion ? It's true he's never had to fight outside circumstances as Mrs. Vale has. No one cared a curse when *he* became a Catholic, or if they did, he found it all too easy not to care whether *they* cared. He's a horribly independent kid. But he *has* had to fight himself, and has to now. He's really a lazy, sensual young cynic, and as sceptical as if he were forty; he certainly does bluff a good deal, but also he takes the—well, deceptiveness off his bluffing by playing the obvious fool, and meanwhile, he's very

circumspectly building himself up with the help of the most rigid principles. Yes—principles! And as for Mrs. Vale, I remember all about her, now. She became a Catholic more or less as a girl; then she married a rich man, but a lot beneath her, and he's treated her shockingly. Nothing could be easier for her than to get a divorce, but, as a Catholic, she won't. She's cut off from her real environment, and she can't—in fact, she *oughtn't* to—mix with his; so she's a lonely woman and apt, as Mr. Travers said, to fight for unimportant crumbs of cake, finding the—er—Bread of Life very dry indeed. Yes, I mean it. She's not *all* she ought to be, else probably she wouldn't find it dry, or could be content with the dryness; but she's got it in her to learn; she's never spoilt her palate; and Lady Sophia, who won't flatter her, will teach her how mucky the cake-crumbs are."

"Well, but I say, what did Miss Travers mean? That's what I want to know."

"I'll tell you now," said I. "Calthrop mentioned a Chapel of the Sacred Heart. By the Sacred Heart we mean, partly, the Love of Jesus Christ, *God made man for men*. All these people we've talked about have a skeleton of 'principles,' as we've said. *You* wanted 'feeling.' Barbara was suggesting you were both right. She meant, a skeleton's not much use without—well, flesh on it, and unless it's alive and fully human. Well, Jesus Christ is that. I've said again and again that the principles you've *got* to have come from God, and in the long run *are* God. But God—took flesh. The whole of our religion is Our Lord, Jesus Christ. A person. If a man once gets hold of that he needn't theorize much. He can let himself go a good deal to the instincts roused in him by associating with—well, with his friend. See?"

"By Jove," he said, "this is getting into deep waters."

"There's deeper yet," I answered.

Chapter VII

MEANWHILE, the Sergeant, as I still found it difficult not to call him, was getting on extremely well in his new post. In the Travers's house he wore a cloth suit, but when he came across for his afternoon work at the Guild offices he wore grey flannel trousers and a Norfolk jacket, and they suited him very well. He educated himself with great rapidity, and, living as he did, surrounded with books and often taking down reviews of them in shorthand and then typing his own work out, he was becoming well-informed and able to express himself to the point. I foresaw the day when he would speak quite forcibly and reliably in public.

I went to the office one afternoon and saw him sitting unusually upright at his machine, typing away with an air of importance. A lady, with her back turned, was examining books in a corner, and in the dark little room I didn't even try to see who she was.

"Hullo, Jack," I said, going up to him. "How's life?"

"Very fair, thank you, Father," said he; "I've a bit of news for you later on. But I think here's someone you know."

I turned round, and lo, Miss Silver, smiling rather nervously through the shadows.

"How very astonishing!" I cried, and shook hands. "What on earth brings you here?"

"I *know* I ought to apologize for not calling first," she said. "But every now and again, when I'm going to London, I have to change at Wilchurch, and between the two trains I just have time to slip up here and look at this *dear* old house and peer round the library. I *know* how busy you are, and I—I didn't *dare* to let you know."

"I wish you had! However, I'm sure Mr. Raikes has done the honours properly."

The Sergeant didn't look round, but even in that light I could see the back of his neck get quite red.

"He's been *most* helpful," she said. "There was so much I wanted to ask, and he's given me a *lot* of useful names."

"How are things going at Bidmoor?"

"Well—*so* so! Better than worse, I hope! But—well, I've rather quarrelled. At least not *quarrelled*, but after seeing how you all went to work, and your *Lancashireman*, I simply *couldn't* content myself with our dilettante little meetings about Dante and Bees and Futurism, and I said, we must be *serious*. And, well, you know, they *wouldn't* be serious. I mean they always took themselves seriously, of course; and their silly little way of being—well, *arch* and humorous, and having silly little inner-circle sort of catch-words isn't what I mean by not being serious. . . . But I said one day, 'Look here, my *dear* people, the long and short of it is we're not being *serious*. We're very ignorant. We never work back to principles——'"

I sighed. The "principle-motif" had been rather heavily played upon, I felt, of late. However, I applauded her sentiment.

"And you fell out on that?"

"Well, it was never quite the same. And I and two or three others" (the Sergeant stopped, with his fingers in the air . . .), "*all girls*, I'm afraid, the men would *not* be interested" (the Sergeant went on typing), "have tried to—well, *be* serious as well as *take* ourselves seriously."

"What's your method?"

"Well, we sit and either we read a bit out of a newspaper, or even one of us says the first sentence that comes into her head, and the moment we are not *quite sure* what a sentence means, or a word, we stop, and say, 'What does that mean, exactly?' or 'My dear, what do you mean *exactly* by "democrat," or "convention," or—or "psychic" or "telepathy,"' and if we can't answer we fine one another, and you'd be astonished how it mounts up!"

"What do you spend it on?"

"Well—we thought we ought to have a *little* relaxation. Chocolates!"

"Excellent! But isn't it rather—scattered? Don't you want to get a little more shape about it all?"

"Yes, indeed we do! And we *also* read the Guild's *Primer of Social Science*, and were astonished to find how commonsense and un-Roman-Catholic it is—at least, I mean——" she hesitated.

"Yes, yes, of course! You mean how what you see to be naturally right and just is part and parcel of Catholic belief and practice?"

"Well, I was going to say, how Catholics seem to be not so very

special in this department, anyhow. But I'll put it in your way, if you like."

"Well, it's a true way. I had a friend who came to me seriously annoyed, because—he was a student of social history—he said he was afraid he'd *got* to become a Catholic, because he found that whatever he'd independently liked—liberty, fraternity, true methods of association, and so on—were not only essential in the Catholic scheme, but had been always taught by the Church, very clearly, very undilutedly, and for reasons both commonsense and sublime."

"Dear me," she said, "how very odd."

"No," I said, "if the Church is right in calling herself Catholic in *every* substantial way. She's universal. Nothing that's real—and only true things are real—is left out of her, and all of all of it is in her."

"That's almost a frightening notion, I should think, *for* a Catholic. You'd feel you had so much more than you can manage."

"It manages us, or ought to."

"Oh dear, Catholicism is so *very* different from what I used to think it was!"

"Listen. May I make you a sort of explanation! Or give you—well, just topics which you might think over; and if any appeal to you particularly, work those out a little. I'm sure Mr. Raikes will be able to put you on to the right books, or the right section of the library, anyway; then you might go on arranging your trains to London, in view of a visit here!"

She blushed and looked away, for she'd realized that I had perfectly well recalled there was no reason whatever for her to change at Wilchurch on her way from Bidmoor to London.

"Well, I think by now that you will see that the principles of social economics, anyway, that you can recognize as valid and enduring, all *work into* the Catholic scheme. They don't anything like exhaust the Catholic doctrine about society, but if you examine the Catholic system, you find, from *that* end, that it possesses elements that include your valid natural principles of justice and human life, and so on. And people who know, tell me that one of the most marked undercurrents of popular feeling and opinion *is* towards just those principles. So that makes one optimist. Then, politically, look at all the heaving, restless struggle of opinion making towards the ideal of a League of Nations. I don't mean any particular league necessarily, but *a* League. Then work downwards

from Catholic doctrine, and you'll see that it necessarily goes towards a brotherhood of Nations, and very nearly created it in the Middle Ages. When Christendom broke up, it did so because nationalism grew so exaggerated that first you had nation *against* nation, and then *groups* of nations opposed, and then the Balance of Power, which has just collapsed so badly. That was a very cynical idea; an equilibrium of mutually *disliking* groups, not a firm union of love. Now, what the Church can do, is to pick out all the good elements in the new popular desire, if it exists, and show *how* good they are, and then, how she has always said they were good, and has offered as good and better."

"If I may interrupt," said the Sergeant, "I have been endeavouring to put that to Miss Silver on more than one occasion."

"Well, we both thank you."

"*I* do, I'm sure," she said. "Mr. Raikes has made it so *much* clearer."

"Well, if only I were a philosopher I'd go right to the opposite extreme and tell you something he won't have talked to you about. I'll just mention it. Ever since the German philosopher, Kant——"

The Sergeant gave a loud chuckle, begged my pardon, and proceeded violently with his typing. When I had recovered from my surprise, I proceeded.

"Well, ever since then, it's been the fashion to say we only know our own ideas—our own feelings—don't know outside things with any certainty at all; and that still less can we attach any intrinsic value to ideas like cause or effect, or even God. The essence of Protestantism is in that, really! It's individualism run wild. When people gave up thinking in terms of Christendom they thought in terms of nations, as I told you, and finally, in terms just of themselves. One result of that was Pantheism—everything was *yourself*, and as far as God meant anything, you were God, too. Or if you didn't run to that sort of mystical way of looking at things, but had a practical temperament, the cult of self led to just self-realization, as they said; to the Superman, who cares for nothing *but* himself. Now, not only that's dead against all Catholic doctrine, but I'm told there are signs of a swing-back among quite non-Catholic thinkers, when they've seen what nonsense, or what horrible results it will lead to."

"As a matter of fact, Mr. Raikes did tell me something about that very topic."

" *Did* you, Jack ?"

In his extreme shyness he reverted almost to the military manner, swivelled round in his chair, fixed his eyes about an inch above my head, dropped his hands to his side (for he couldn't exactly stand, after all, to attention) and recited:

" Mr. Winterton, Father, having had occasion to mention to me the series of simple Philosophical Handbooks the Guild is bringing out, I took the liberty of asking him what philosophy might really be, me having heard the word but never understanding it properly. And Mr. Winterton, he very kindly took me over part of the ground himself, and partly to make sure I'd properly understood his explanations, and if I'm to tell the truth I make no doubt through me having something of a swollen head as regards the whole matter, I put the main points in due order to Miss Silver on her next visit."

He ceased abruptly.

" Very good," I said, " you are dismissed."

He stared, grinned suddenly, and plunged back to his work.

" Now," I said, " since I can trust to the Sergeant for your philosophic illumination, and since I know you like psychology, and since *I* like history, I shall make a remark or two about what's going on in *those* departments, unless, of course, I shall make you late for your train."

She smiled wanly, and told me there were several.

" Well, you told me Miss Newton had been discussing this new psychology which everyone's talking about. She said that everything you thought or ever did could be reduced to the automatic working out of a few primary instincts about which you knew nothing except that they existed, and which either had free exit, in which case you were normal, or were repressed and forced their way out distorted, in which case you were an eccentric. That, she said, explains Man. All the things you think are so noble and beautiful are really illusions, sort of shadow-spectres, thrown on the clouds outside you by these instincts *in* you. Well, even if all the facts she relates *are* observed facts, and rightly observed, they don't explain *men* any more than you've explained a working electrical machine when you've catalogued the rods and wheels. There's the electric spark which *must* be there, and which is different from rods and wheels. It explains why they move, but they don't explain *it*, though it's got to be there if they are to move. Very well. As this new science advances, people begin to see the same sort of thing.

It explains some of the machinery of mind, but it doesn't explain mind. It exacts the existence of something special which they call 'psychic energy.' Something quite different from even that mysterious fact they call 'physical energy.' Now Catholic philosophy, by another road, proves that something which it calls 'spirit' exists, and Catholic psychology shows that one element in us is spiritual. And when we talk of spirit *as* united with matter in such a way as to make one complete substance, in the way that a human person is *one*, we call it 'soul'; and when we speak of it more precisely as working in with that matter—*i.e.*, the body and the brain in particular—we can call it 'mind.' But it's all the same *thing*. So the special psychic energy which the new psychologist reaches is the special work of that special stuff which we've always believed to exist and have called 'spirit' or 'soul' or 'mind.' And two more points. If it's a thoroughly different sort of thing to the brain and the body, it didn't *evolve out of that*, and the old crude theory of evolution of everything out of *one* thing gets another knock. You can put things in a regular series of more and more perfect, if you like; but it's not one thing continually becoming more perfect. And finally, I think I told you that the same students are beginning to recognize what they call the dynamic value of ideas—that is, that ideas do a work that instinct can't, and that it's their business to govern and put order in all that shapeless instinct. But they also are recognizing that that's just what they *can't* do, unless they're believed to be true. And it's impossible to believe they are if you suspect they aren't; for instance, I shan't get any better if I think the doctor isn't telling me the truth when he tells me I *am* better. So the Pragmatist philosophy which was so fashionable, and said that you couldn't ever tell if a thing was true, but only whether it *worked*, and then it was true *for you*, well, that gets a nasty knock, too. For unless you can believe a thing's true in itself, it *won't* work, and Pragmatism fails pragmatically."

"I don't follow the last part," she said, meekly. "But I'd love to learn some more about evolution."

"Some day," I said, "and Mr. Raikes, I'm sure, can do that part, too. But let's get to something much more concrete. Take history. I'll be short, but I do want to touch on most of the main topics you might like to think about."

"I always feel I don't really *know* history," she cried. "I mean, I read and I read, but I can't get a general impression

that I can feel is true. Can one *trust* English History books ?"

" Sergeant," I said, " what do you mean by not giving Miss Silver some general impressions she can trust ?"

" I made bold," he said, rather haughtily, " to indicate to her such articles in the *Catholic Encyclopædia* as you advised me to read myself, and I trust I wasn't wrong. I also referred her to your reverence for further general impressions," said he, quite wickedly.

" It is true, Jack," said I, with propitiatory meekness, " that for detail work I can't compete with you. Still, it *is* useful to provide general ideas—sort of frameworks, or organic notions, and even picturesque views, isn't it, so as to be able to make something solid, and also living out of the details ?"

He grunted, and was evidently most pleased at having established his position.

" Well," I said to Miss Silver, " I want to point out that I consider there've been two great swing-backs, so to say, in modern historical work. One concerns the Middle Ages. They used to be treated as a sort of blank period or barbaric, or at least no better than romantic and productive of Cathedrals. But now people are beginning to realize what a wonderful society there was then, and how active; and how much thought. The Renaissance is getting dislodged; its *real* contribution was much more imitative than creative, and anarchic than constructive. Luther and Calvin are quite pushed off their pedestals, for different reasons, I confess; and as for Henry VIII. and Elizabeth, and poor little Edward VI., even, as far as the Reformation goes—well, no one now ought to think much of them. They were engaged in cutting England off from the immemorial civilization of Europe, and they succeeded all too well. The substitution of *their* authority for the old authority of Christendom was a mere first step—because it was so ridiculous —to the throwing off of all authority altogether, which is what we're tending to, ever since we realized that the modern State tends to be the Almighty Tyrant which replaces royal absolutism. Now, lots of holes can be picked in that, but it's a general impression, I assure you, you can trust, Miss Silver ! And Mr. Raikes shall fill in details."

The Sergeant's mind had meanwhile taken its rather stately way towards repentance.

" I've already tried to do so, Father," he said, " by taking Miss

Silver round the Cathedral like you did me. In the absence of yourself, we used the local guide, but I was able to repeat much that you had said in the days when you took me there in a chair. And this time," he added superbly, " there wasn't no nonsense—any nonsense—with the verger. Right round we went. And I endeavoured to draw lessons."

" And I was *most* grateful," she cried. " I saw it all with different eyes ! I got so enthusiastic that I crawled right into St. William's tomb. . . ."

The Sergeant suddenly covered his mouth with his hand to hide a grin at I know not what memory. Then he turned scarlet, and typed furiously.

" The other great swing-back," I said, " is this. Non-Catholics used to make out that Roman Catholicism really began in the Middle Ages. When they began to know more about the Middle Ages they pushed its beginning back—oh, say, to St. Augustine, about four hundred. And since then, right to the very first generation after the Apostles. All the structural elements of Catholicism are seen alive and working *then*. And even more generally than that, the fact that the Church was a corporation, an organic concrete social fact, and that Christianity never was a sort of pious mood merely—a religious vapour taking shapes and colours from whatever blew upon it and shone upon it, finally being condensed and bottled up, so to say, into a bottle supplied by a series of flukes, so that it turned into the Church as we know it—well, that's more and more recognized. From the outset the Christian religion was a Catholic Church; hierarchical, sacramental. This is so true that scholars began to say the early Church borrowed her sacraments and formulas and so on from pagan systems round about her; but they oughtn't to say that any more; *that* theory, too, is out of date. And even the Gospels, well, the Church has always believed they were written by the people they profess to have been written by, and at certain traditional dates, say, for the first three, from 60 to 70 A.D. Fifty years ago, however, the modern civilization of that time would have called Catholics perfect fools for maintaining that, and no doubt did, and lots of people still do. But *they* don't realize that criticism has swung very far back indeed, and that very un-Catholic minded students now say about the Gospels pretty well what we do, and always did. So even in your study of history, Miss Silver, I believe it will pay you to see what the Church believes on certain topics, and use that as a signpost. I believe you'll find it points to what every kind of science is

more and more realizing to be true each in its own independent way. In fact, if Catholics are 'out of date' it's because they're a little ahead of their times!"

The Sergeant was pursuing some dream of his own, and said nothing, though I gave him the chance.

"One thing more, Miss Silver. Work back like that, and you discover at a certain date, say 100 A.D., an extraordinary going concern, the Catholic Church. A whole Christian folk, very soon spreading from Spain to Persia, and from Tyneside to the Sahara, all thinking the same, all feeling the same, all ready to die in thousands in incredible torments—slaves, soldiers, children, aged bishops, great ladies and repentant sinners—for their faith. A hundred years before that you find nothing that can *account* for that. Lots, no doubt, that is far more intelligible once the Church exists, and throws light backward, but nothing which is any sort of *sufficient cause* for that phenomenon of the Church. So *its* cause was in between. And it can only be what the Church with one voice said it was, and says, namely, Jesus Christ. It was for Him they died; for a Person; for better than father or mother or lover."

The Sergeant stirred.

"Them days was good," he said, quietly, "in the hospital. And the first best day was the one when you told about the Prodigal Son, by the fire. Never got over that, the Corporal didn't. Reckon *I've* come home. Reckon he's *got* to. And I've that bit of news to tell you afterwards, Father," he said, more briskly. "But you finish what you're going to say, first."

"Only this, Jack—if I may say so, Miss Silver, study Jesus Christ and His revelation. You'll see then what it all flows from and goes back to. Let me look for a small book that may help you—you can take it——"

I went off into the shadows, for Miss Silver stood nervous, twisting the cords of her little bag. There is always a certain shock when a soul encounters Christ.

I came back in a moment.

"Why shouldn't we," said I, "go and get some tea?"

"To the Too Too Tea-rooms," she cried, clapping her hands.

"So you know them?"

"I——" said she and the Sergeant simultaneously, and then stopped.

"What were you both going to say?" I asked.

"Of course I saw them when I was staying here in the summer," said Miss Silver, elusively.

The Sergeant looked reproachfully at her.

"Why, that was where I took you, Miss Silver," he said, "when we'd finished the Cathedral. Telling you it was the Reverend Father's favourite place."

This astonishing information—both parts of it—left me speechless; so without more discussion, we proceeded with much dignity (for I might have said the bull-dog had come with me) to the Too Too Tea-rooms. The rooms were unchanged; the same three instruments exhaled their hesitating souls in much the same music; only the people there were different—not so happy, surely, as when the timid Tommies were being supplied with tiny teas. . . . I missed the blue flannel and red ties, and the big rough overcoats, and oh! how I missed the Corporal! Even from the Sergeant, something had evaporated and was lost, though he'd gained so much, I knew. We sat down at our old table. I had some snap-shots with me, by good luck, and showed Miss Silver the Sergeant as he was then, and Hallinan, and little Jock, and Francis Newnes, then Corporal, now Mister. She was enchanted with him, and grew so enthusiastic over his forelock that the Sergeant, moved by some primary emotion, suddenly announced, with vast severity:

"Silly, I called it. But erratic he was, and ever will be."

"*Now* tell me your news," said I.

He looked deprecatingly at Miss Silver.

"You'll forgive me, Miss Silver," said he, "if I tell the Father what perhaps you won't quite sympathize with. My old mother," said he, turning back to me, "is to become a Catholic." His stateliness fell off him like a cloak; he turned red, grinned all across his broad and honest face, and punched me very hard on the chest, quite as he'd done on that distant Whitsun-eve. . . .

"My *dear* Jack! I *am* delighted! Be delighted, Miss Silver! I assure you it's worth it."

And I told her quickly about that heroic old lady, managing her household so vigorously despite her terrible crippled state (she had no arms); giving her three sons to the war; going of her own free-will, lest she should be an encumbrance, to the Refuge, where she still was, being too weak now to be moved; writing her letters with that pencil strapped so that she could hold it in her teeth, and collecting pence for her boy in hospital by singing her little songs.

Miss Silver mopped her eyes quite unaffectedly.

"An' you remember that old badge," he cried, "that was given me by the mamselle" (he glanced maliciously at Miss Silver, but she only smiled), "and how I worked it on to that square of old-gold silk, an' how you made me crosses an' alphas and omegas an' a wreath of flowers an' such to decorate it? Well, I sends it to her, an' she's that proud of it she has it put up beside her and won't have it down; and they all asks her about it, and she don't know how to go to explain it, and on my first leave I tell her all about it, and that Mrs. Wroxton, she tells her more, and the priest, he notices it and tells her *more*, an' someone starts chippin' her about receiving valentines from her pal, much as I used to think those badges were; and she ups and she'll have none of it, but she explains what she's learnt it means, and in her heart she's thinking what it means to *me*, me being her favourite, though why, I *don't* know, my brothers bein' worth a dozen of a chap like me. P'raps that's why," he said, meditatively, and quite forgetting Miss Silver, and I daresay me. "Never any too satisfactory, I wasn't. Both headstrong *and* stupid. Never took advice *and* never acted really sensible on my own account. Worried her terribly, I did, but always came back when in trouble, or rather, not till I'd got out of it, for I was powerful obstinate. But, however," said he, pulling himself together, "she gets the idea that the Heart of God has been with me and carin' for me, and—well, Father, it's topsy-turvy, I *know*, but I can't help it, for it's like that, I'm sure, and there's many a mother I'm sure, too, it would be like that for—once she gets it into her head that the Heart of God loves *me*, she loves it back more than ever she could if it had just loved her, she loves it all over again when she understands *I* love it, which I do," he said, looking at me with great dog-like eyes, almost as Hallinan used to do, "an' I tell her all about the Jock saying Communion was the one thing, and she begins to want it too, wanting to be in God's Heart, and may I be forgiven if I say what I shouldn't, wanting to get God into herself in a manner of speakin' and hug Him in a manner of speakin'—an' oh *lor*, I'm afraid I'm talking a deal of nonsense."

"So your dear mother's decided on being a Catholic, Jack," I said, after waiting a little.

"She has that, Father. And Mrs. Wroxton, she wrote to me to-day to say it could be quickly done, for like a child she is; takes to it like a fish *in* water, if you take me."

" This is the crown to your happiness, Jack," I said. " We'll all thank God together."

Miss Silver then said rather chokily that she must go and catch her train, and I answered that if she didn't mind, I'd ask Mr. Raikes to escort her to the station as I had an enormous number of letters to write, which was not only, I considered, truthful, but certainly tactful, too.

Chapter VIII

QUITE late in December I was walking along the tow-path by our river Hale when Reggie Orwylstree caught me up. It isn't much of a river, but it has its charms, especially when it broadens out, and on an afternoon like this. There was a mist, of course, but the sun was bright behind it; it was surprising how many leaves remained, shining a strong gold, on the trees nearer the town; old buildings stood among them, they, too, brown-golden or almost copper colour, and the shadows were every blue, from sapphire blue to peacock. And over it all, softening, fusing it, the mist drew silver veils.

We said " Hullo " to one another; Reggie said he'd come my way for a bit, and then we relapsed into the silence of friendship.

At last he said:

" This fellow Blake is getting a bit of a strain."

" Oh ! How ?"

" Positively haunts me."

" Since you're billeted at Bursdon ?"

" That's right. Constantly over on his motor-bike and wants to take me out in his side-car."

" Rather flattering, isn't it? Or perhaps he's got no friends near Hanton."

" Dozens. Popular sort of chap, apparently."

" Well, don't you like him ?"

" Oh, I like him all right."

" Well, what's the matter ? So do I. So do we all, as far as I know."

He heaved a portentous sigh. " It's all most deucedly complicated. Everything was comfortable till he came."

I didn't think it complicated at all, but I merely told him to behave decently, anyway.

" Oh, I'll behave decently," he said. Then he added: " It must be rotten for padres always having to feel alike to everyone."

"I don't."

"Well, to behave as if you did; that's worse."

"Well, in another sense I do. There's always one or two large things that are true about everybody, and they're apt to swamp the minor differences, or, at any rate, keep 'em quite secondary."

"What d'you mean?"

"You know perfectly well."

"You make me tired when you're pious," he said, but smiling. "Of course, I needn't say old Blake is always catechizing me about the Catholic religion. Well, *I* don't know anything about it."

"Don't be silly. You know quite enough. After all, you're a convert yourself."

"Oh, ages ago, just after I left the 'Varsity."

"Well, you've learnt a lot since. I hope you aren't tongue-tied when Blake asks you things. It's much better you should explain than I."

"But I tell you he's a bit of a strain. He asks me no end of questions out of a little book." He glared at me indignantly.

"Well," I said. "Don't blame me. I don't particularly want him to have a little book. I didn't give him any. I don't even know what he's got. If anything, I want to keep him off little books. I want to keep him to principles."

"If you ask me, he's getting a bit fed up with principles. He says he hasn't got any, or if he has he doesn't know what they are. In fact, I think he thinks it a bit indecent to talk about that sort of thing. He said he thought decent average men got along all right without 'em, or without discussing 'em, anyway; like healthy people and their livers."

"I know; he said just the same sort of thing to me. And I agreed. *We* don't talk about 'em. Barbara doesn't explain her principles to you, that I know of. Nor I mine to her. Because we're healthy living Catholics, and, as you say, we take 'em for granted. But we have them, and we ought to know them, and then keep healthy and just *live*. But he's like a man—oh well, he can't *do* any of the Catholic things because he knows nothing of the Catholic life, nor that he's half dead, from that point of view. It's no good plaguing him with no end of details when he hasn't got the main ideas. You can't start building your house from the chimney downwards."

" But I thought you told me I ought to answer him when he asks ?"

" Oh, Lord, yes. Tell him what we do, so that you can clear the ground of mistakes. He probably thinks we believe images are alive, or that the Pope's God, or something. But if you can, show him the idea of the thing—Purgatory, for instance—in an accurate way; but always point out it joins on to something much deeper. Drive him back to the bottom-most. God; his immortal soul; sin; revelation; Jesus Christ."

He looked very worried.

" I'd feel such a damned hypocrite," he said.

" Not at all. You're not a hypocrite. You've got a very good record, all things considered. You aren't even rickety nowadays. You go ahead and tell him."

" I'm not exactly a pyramid, you know. Things still upset me, on and off."

I have a great respect as well as affection for Reggie, so I told him he was all right, and then said:

" You'll do him a good service if you do no more than make him understand religion isn't effervescent piety, or odds and ends of behaviour, but a very practical logical working out of—well, principles. Sorry, but I can't help it."

" It's all very well. You know I'm not emotional. But he's got to *feel* something or other. Else it'll just stay an affair of theory for him, even if he sees it."

" Well, on the whole, I'd trust God for that part. However, if *you* ' feel,' don't sheepishly pretend you *don't*. Of course, you'll never pretend you do when you don't. As a matter of fact, I was trying to engineer a sort of transition to this sort of thing after he and I left the Travers's after Barbara's birthday party."

" What d'you mean by transition ?"

" I was trying to get him across from too much abstract principle to—to Our Lord."

" Oh, I see."

" Cecil Calthrop mentioned the Sacred Heart. Well, there you are. The Incarnation. All our principles are true; but we're meant to see them incarnate. We're *meant* to. To learn about God in Jesus Christ, or through Him. Religion isn't a theory, nor yet just an institution. It's a Person."

I was touched to see a sort of sadness come into his expression. " Henceforward," I continued, " it's *all* personal. Our Lord is a person, and He wants us to think of God as Father."

" It's odd. One's accustomed to think of Christ as—oh well in Holy Communion and being crucified, and so on. But, somehow, one never thinks of Him as having told us very much about God. Does one think about 'God' much? I don't know. I dare say I do. But I don't *think* about thinking about God."

" Well, He *did* tell us, you know—in fact, it's the centre—a sort of fountain—of His revelation. It *was* new. Even for the Jews, in the mass. God—not just creator and master, nor King nor Father even of a people—but *Father* of each soul—all that's lovable in human fatherhood first of all, and far better, in Him; and all the consequences with regard to one's fellow-men, who are all His sons, and our brothers. That's one of the large things that tends to push down personal likes and dislikes to quite a low place. It brings in love, you know."

" Oh, Lord!" he cried. " It's a queer thing, all this love business. . . ."

He stopped, and leant over the railing of a little bridge.

Yellow leaves floated by, and the warm December was silent all around us. I waited a little to let the image of Barbara flicker out of his half-awareness. Then he said:

" But *do* I love God? *Do* I? Do I—*like* Him as much as—well, as anyone I *do* like?"

" The deeper love is, the more silent and less tumultuous it becomes, I suppose. You notice the sea more when it's stormy. But storms aren't the sea. True love goes straight into service. Service of the person you love and of persons he or she loves. You don't have to talk a lot. You hardly have to *feel* you feel. . . . You just *do*. . . ."

" All the same," he said astonishingly, " there's moments when I could *hug* God."

So he and the Sergeant met there. . . .

Bells began to chime in Wilchurch. Fountains of praise rose from the old towers, and all creation stirred together and aroused itself to hymn the revelation of the sons of God. The willow trees and the river swam before my eyes for a moment and then vanished. Then Reggie's voice recalled me, saying he had to be getting back.

" Come to tea with Barbara," said I. " I'm going."

" Can't," he answered, walking very fast.

" Where are you going?"

"Tea with Blake. At the Club."

"The Club teas," said I, "are getting worse and worse." And we grumbled peaceably together till we parted at Curfew Corner.

* * * * * *

I, however, went on to tea, as I'd said, to the Travers's. Barbara was writing in the drawing-room, and Mr. Travers was dozing by the fire, and just nodded and smiled to me. The drawing-room was unlit save by this fire, and two candles at the far end, on Barbara's writing-table. They shone in her hair.

"Oh!" she cried, when I came in. "Thank goodness you've come." And she flung down her pen.

"Thank you," I said. "What were you doing?"

"C.W.L.," she answered, crossing to the fire. She sat down by it, on a stool. Then she suddenly said:

"Reggie Orwylstree is a very exorbitant young man."

I swallowed a smile, but said nothing.

"Don't you want to know why?" she asked.

"Very much."

"I *had* to do all these letters, and he wanted me to go for a walk with him."

"Oh, I met him. We went on a bit together. I thought he seemed rather sulky."

"What did he talk about?"

"How bad the teas are getting at the Club. So did I."

"Oh *Father!* What else?"

"On the importance of having High Principles."

"Didn't he say anything about me?"

"Alas, alas, my poor Barbara! I believe we forgot to till the very end. Then I asked him to come to tea here and he said he was going to see Captain Blake."

"That's another very encroaching youth," she remarked.

"Whom does he encroach on?"

"Me, of course."

"Oh!"

"He's always round, asking things."

"About Catholicism?"

"Oh, *dear* no!" she exclaimed, sitting bolt upright. "Why should he? He isn't thinking of becoming a Catholic, is he?"

"How should I know?"

"Oh, for goodness' sake don't be *discreet*——"

"I'm very sorry."

"Now you're being meek! That's worse! I can't possibly bear it. . . . *Do* you think we need have the lamps? I suppose tea by fire-light is all right? Daddy likes it."

"Unless it tastes different, like tobacco," I said. "I want your tea to taste exactly as it always does."

"Discreet, meek, and then affable!" she cried, getting up. "I won't have it. Help me move the table. I *must* have my tea after all those letters."

"Have the C.W.L.-ites been annoying?"

"Not *as* C.W.L.-ites. But these combined meetings are perfectly Satanic."

"Are you having a combined meeting?"

"If only," she said, "you condescended to mix in decent Society, you'd know we're having a general women's meeting—*all* sorts—in January; and, by the way, *you're* down to speak. You're a side-show."

"First I've heard of it."

"Yes, you haven't been told yet. I've only just put you down."

"Thanks immensely," said I. "I'm not being meek," I hastened to add.

"You certainly aren't," she said. "In fact, I'm afraid you're going to be fidgety. . . . But, besides you, there'll be Miss Acacia Tremayne to represent the Stage Guild——"

"How *did* you get Miss Acacia Tremayne?"

"I was waiting in the vestibule of the Piccadilly Palace Hotel."

"Dear me," I gasped, "*was* you?"

"Sometimes," she said, reproachfully, "you are a very silly padre. I'd gone there to take out poor old great-uncle Dick, who was staying there, and he'd forgotten his umbrella and had to go up again to fetch it."

Great-uncle Dick was a Rural Dean. I don't quite know what Rural Deans are, but anyhow, he was it; and true to the custom of the lesser dignitaries of the Anglican Establishment, had evidently taken rooms at the Piccadilly Palace as being central and inexpensive and (I suppose) innocuously worldly. On my rare visits there I had always admired the mixture of gaitered ecclesiastics, pink young men, and, well, their cousins, I suppose.

"But that still doesn't explain how you met Miss Acacia Tremayne," I urged.

"She had a little dog," said Barbara, "on a chain. And while she was putting a little powder on her nose the little dog ran out to

the full length of the chain to bark at a lift girl who was talking in that extraordinary voice they *do*, and great-uncle Dick came down and tripped over the chain and pulled poor Miss Tremayne over too, of course, and she scratched her nose on somebody's spurs—*everyone* ran to pick her up—and great-uncle Dick trod on her puff-box. She was *too* sweet about it, because it was a very pretty one. So I had to lend her some of mine for her poor nose, and——"

"Barbara! Do you powder your nose?"

She just smiled at me, in a pitying but quite affectionate sort of way.

"Well, you see, everything flew out of her little bag, and there was a rosary, so I saw she was a Catholic. So while she was putting her hat straight, I collected her for the Stage Guild, and she said she'd be here in January, playing in *Miss Chutney of Putney*, and so I've put her down to speak at the combined meeting."

"Well, well, well!"

"Don't you approve?"

"Oh, delighted! All the lads'll roll up like anything. Having a collection?"

"How sordid! No! Well, we'll see. What could we have it for? Think of something."

"What's the meeting for? I should think that'd give you an idea."

"Well, to get the Catholic Societies to know one another and co-operate. And even to get the Catholics to know one another."

"I suppose they don't?"

"We've about eight hundred Catholics here, and each Catholic knows about three other Catholics."

"Reggie was a guest in a Mess once where the doctor said he had a story, but wouldn't tell it if there were any Catholics present. Reggie held up his hand and *seven* more out of eighteen held up theirs, and till then none of 'em had known the others were. And once in Italy someone wouldn't believe I was a proper priest because, they said, there were no Catholics in England. . . . However, that's off the point. Why don't they know one another? I bet they know all *about* one another."

"Of course, I was exaggerating. But it *is* dreadful how cliquey people are. And the worse the less reason there is for it."

"Ah. Where there are big social differences you can't talk about cliques. It's where there are practically no differences that people emphasize them to show they do exist. Between Mrs. A.,

who can afford three sunflowers and a parrot on her bonnet, and Mrs. B., who can only afford two sunflowers and a pine-apple."

"*Pineapple!*" she said. "All the same, hats do make a difference. Anyhow, nobody wears *bonnets* now, except the Cathedral old women."

"Once," I said, "a lady told a friend of mine she didn't know me to *bow* to, though she *moved* to me because she thought she *ought*. She wouldn't know-me-to-bow-to because I knew her husband's friend, who was better than he was at the flageolet. Also one of the two played poker. I forget which. I'd never heard about 'moving-to' before. But I'd noticed a kind of ripple when she passed me. I thought she was nervous."

"It's perfectly wonderful," said she, "how approved of I am when Aunt Sophia's been here. Everyone knows. Everyone says for weeks afterwards, 'And *how* is dear Lady Sophia?' or else, 'How *wonderful* your dear aunt is, dear Miss Travers!'"

"If," said I, "poor people feel awkward or silly about the rich, well, it's easy to forgive them. But if rich or 'upper-class' people behave wrongly to the poor, I *can't* forgive them. They ought to be scourged for it, simply. And the middle ones, *educated*. I can't think of anything more *uneducated* than to make class distinctions. Only people who are afraid of their position collapsing have to bolster it up. Only people who think they won't be taken for 'upper' have to let other people know they *are* 'upper.' And that proves they *aren't*."

"That's why I like stage folk," she said. "They're so good-hearted! They're so tolerant. Too tolerant, I daresay. People say they do all sorts of things they shouldn't. I don't know, but I expect other people do other things they shouldn't. And they're vain and jealous, of course. But at bottom they're kind-hearted. They're human."

"And do let's be divine! Another thing Reggie and I talked of, if you want to know, is the Fatherhood of God. If He's Father we're sons and daughters, and therefore brothers and sisters. We *are!* If only people wouldn't think of these things as metaphors! One can't make 'Our Father' mean about as much and as little as 'Dear Sir'! God isn't a sort of North Pole with all the lines of longitude knotted on to it, but the Father of a family. . . . Sorry, Barbara; but I do feel so strongly about this! Even without knowing about grace, and the Body of Christ, and

Christ in us—well, anyway, God's in us, and if we remember that, how can we remember anything else !"

Here at last Elspeth really did bring in the lamps, and I rose and said good-bye.

She remained there, however, looking into the fire and smiling to herself. Then she said, half afraid lest I should fancy her irreverent:

" Well, I promise you I'll be a sister to both of them. . . . !"

And I departed.

Chapter IX

A WEEK or two after this Blake invaded my room and sat down on my bed.

"Look here," said he, "I particularly want you to come to dinner to-night. There's a reason. There's a parson called Archer staying in the house, and just as I thought I was getting along all right he's upset the whole apple-cart. I don't believe he believes in anything. Quite a decent sort of fellow; but, by Jove, when I said I knew you, and was half thinking of being an R.C., he fired up and said it wasn't fair of you to be profiting by me having palled up with you to try to persuade me to 'vert. He thinks I'm a perfect ass, intellectually, and no doubt I am, and that you're bound to be able to argue me into anything. And he says if you're anything like intelligent yourself you've got your tongue in your cheek all the while, because you must know modern thought's exploded all your whole position, or something like that. He thinks you don't really believe it all, you see, but that for some reason or another you're bound to try to make me swallow it."

"I don't think I like your parson," said I.

"Oh, he doesn't really mean anything nasty. He thinks you're in a false position."

"Well, I needn't stay in it, need I?"

"No; but you know *I* began by thinking something like that."

"That was different, though I didn't like it. But he ought to know better. But people constantly try to kid themselves that everyone at heart thinks what they do; especially if what the other person *says* he thinks, annoys them. What's his particular point? Or is he just vague?"

"Oh, he's got hold of something to prove the Old Testament was all written A.D., or something."

"Well, we're New Testament folks, anyway; so it wouldn't matter as much as if the New Testament was written B.C. However, it wasn't. Nor the Old Testament A.D."

" Well, he didn't say that exactly; but he meant lots later than it professed to be; and somehow he made out that all the prophecies were proved to be not prophecies at all, but written after the event, and meaning something quite different."

" Listen; it's quite true that anything about the Old Testament is specially difficult, because it involves a lot of critical questions—he's right there—which makes it desirable one should know Eastern languages and so on before one tackles them in detail. No one would think of beginning to teach a man Christianity nowadays by discussing prophecies, I suppose. But I believe I could put a few large leading notions to you about the history of the Jews which might be useful."

" Carry on, then."

" Well, I begin by saying that the Jewish people—the Hebrews—stand absolutely alone in history, in a lot of ways. They're unique."

" Thank God for that," said he, disconcertingly. " Can't stand Jews. One lot of Jews is plenty."

" Well, that's as it may be. But now look at this, first. Here's one little family, *clan* if you like, detaching itself from a huge race and an enormous Empire in Mesopotamia; a large, rich, complicated military monarchy; very civilized, scientific even, artistic; with a strong established religion. And this tiny group wanders off across the continent and gets towards the coast of the Mediterranean, and gets mixed up with a lot of other tribes, and floats off to Egypt, and comes back, and settles down after a fashion, gets carted away to Egypt again, and comes back again, and has generations of fighting, and at last develops a King, and gets an ancient city for a capital, and then gets knocked about worse than ever, splits into two, and gets deported wholesale back to where it came from; and gets trampled down by Greeks of a sort, and then trampled all over again by Rome, and its capital razed again and again—and then suddenly you find Assyria's dead, and Babylon's dead—Persia and Egypt and Greece, and even Rome, as a pagan Empire, and yet—here are the Jews, scattered everywhere, with no real home, German Jews, Polish Jews, English and French and Eastern Jews, but so alive, so special, that you can single 'em out to hate them as you hate no one else, and certainly none of those ancient Empires they came from or lived among. The race is *unique*."

" Jove !" he said. " I'd never thought about it like that."

" Now notice, the only thing in the least original they provided

was their religion. They were the very reverse of artists; they weren't scientists; most certainly not philosophers; nor lawyers in the Roman sense; they produced most assuredly an unequalled poetry, but *all* their literature is religious, inspired by their religion, treating all history from a religious point of view; loving Jerusalem with a passionate love that Athens was never loved with, nor Rome, nor certainly Paris or London, because the Temple was there; and, in short, such that you see that the law of their religion was the law of their life; and it looks as though, as you can't kill them, so neither can you kill their religion. They live by it, and it makes them unkillable. No persecution ever has annihilated it or them."

"Well, if you want me to tell the truth, I consider their religion was perfectly beastly. Absolutely bloodthirsty. I thought so even at school, though lots of the Old Test. was good fun, if you'll excuse my saying so. But I know you want me to say what I think. And as for the Psalms and the old prophets, no one ever made head or tail of 'em, *I'm* sure. *I* didn't."

"Well, some people do, you know. But I acknowledge I don't think the Old Testament's very well taught in schools, especially Protestant schools, where they make so much of it, and not even in Catholic ones. But now here's a third point, and very much *to* the point. Notice that whatever was *bad* in their character—and I agree with you they seem to have had, at any rate, a detestable natural character on the whole—was exactly what urged them away from their religion. Whenever they try to mate with other religions, and they were always trying to, it was with peoples and religions which were savage and lustful and *always remained so*, and in which the lust and the savagery seem to have been part and parcel of their religions."

I gave him some details of the worships of Moloch and Astarte till he began to be shocked.

"But," I went on, "there was always some force or other, or persons—especially your prophets—who kept pulling them back to their own religion, and what's more, kept purifying and purifying their idea of their religion; so that the Jews are the *only example* in history of a race which consistently pursued an *upward evolution* in religion, though you'll hear the exact opposite maintained often enough. You'll hear that all races, Jews included, started with worship of ghosts or ancestors, or lots of gods, anyhow, and gradually purified their worship and their creed. But they didn't. To begin with, you have to do violence to the evidence to show that the Jews

hadn't—ever since Abraham's period, anyhow—a nucleus of real monotheism, which became even more generally and more properly understood and appropriated by the race; the spiritual worship of one only Eternal and Almighty God. And again, you have to do violence to evidence to show that anything of the same sort went on on the same scale anywhere else. Religions elsewhere became more complicated certainly, but not purer. There's more monotheism in early Egypt, for example, than in later. No; gods became more numerous, save for a few philosophers in some places; and worship mostly became worse."

"Well," he said, "no doubt that's true if you say so. It's all off my beat. But I'll take your word. And I *did* always feel there was something uncanny about the Jews."

"Call it that if you like. Now a fourth point. All pagan literature looks backwards; all Jewish, forward. See what I mean? Pagan writers picture a golden age in the past from which we've steadily degenerated. Only once in a way, at a crisis, they are hopeful. From the very outset, Jewish literature, which expresses national belief, acknowledges there's been a crash; that a disaster has befallen the race; but, equally from the outset it asserts that there's to be a restoration; a Restorer. Mind you, *asserts*. Not just hopes, or guesses, or prays. It *asserts*. Why? Because it believes God's promised it. The whole of that literature has a unique feature—absolutely unshared. The God it believes in, who can't lie, has *promised* a Redeemer. That's prophecy *en bloc*. Now, that idea is *permanent* and *grows*. He's to be a descendant of David—and *that's* why David, they feel, is so important; not because he's a great conqueror, but because he's the ancestor of the King-to-be; for it's to be a King, with a Kingdom. And a *holy* King, with a righteous Kingdom, see? A Kingdom which is to be the triumph of God. And a worldwide triumph. And an eternal triumph."

"I see where you're wanting to take me," he said, gravely.

"If I were explaining this to you in detail," I said, "I should try to show you how a purer and more spiritual idea of the King and Kingdom is always *dawning* through a less spiritual one. The prophets often see one thing through another. For example, they saw the nation *so* persecuted, God's worship *so* dethroned and defiled, that they very likely longed to feel that the coming of the destined Saviour was due for *them*; things couldn't be worse; He must surely come *now!* But they never exactly say so, or never exclusively so.

Always something better dawns across the immediate hope of mere national restoration or triumph. On one side, the idea keeps spreading out and universalizing itself; and on the other it gets tied down and made more detailed in many ways. For example, it is certainly stated that the King was to be born, not only of David's stock, but with David's city Bethlehem for birthplace. Catholics have always believed it was said He would be born of a Virgin. Especially it was said He would be rejected by the very people He came to save, and die—be buried, and yet triumph. But I don't want to go into details, as I said. But do notice that all sorts of converging lines define themselves; three especially, one leading you towards the vision of this destined Saviour as suffering—though the Jews so hated the idea that they tried hard to forget those prophecies; one, that this Saviour was both a 'son' of David, and yet is some quite special superhuman relation to God Himself; and third, that His full Triumph meant the consummation of all history, the end of this world, and the beginning of eternity. No one put all these ideas together; but when Christ came, there they all were, floating, drifting, yet somehow, no more developing; but they're knotted together, they become reciprocally intelligible, they get their full meaning, their fulfilment, in Christ, or *nowhere*."

He sat almost horrorstruck.

"I wish I'd never come to you," said he, "I can't cope with this." He puffed at his pipe. "I didn't quite mean that," he resumed. "But it's all pretty beastly! And I don't mean *that*," he went on after a pause, "but, oh Lord! look here, I don't want to be let in for all this—I'm not a religious fellow. I see it's all damned serious, but I don't want to be serious. You make me damned uncomfortable. I tell you I'm not the sort of man to cope with it."

"My dear boy," I said. "The first thing Christ'll tell you when you can listen to Him, is that God's your father, and that there's nothing to be afraid of. No one can cope with it. But He can cope with you, I assure you, He won't make you uncomfortable, except in the sense you make a man who's been snake-bitten—yes, by Jove, snake-bitten! or frost-bitten, anyway—uncomfortable so that he shan't settle down to sleep and sleep himself into death. You're waking up; and we all hate getting out of bed. I'm afraid I'm mixing my metaphors. But, anyway, show pluck! And say 'Thy Kingdom Come.'"

He groaned, and got up.

" Well, anyway, you'll come to dinner, won't you ?"

" Oh yes," said I, " I'll come."

* * * * *

I arrived at Blake's home at 7.30, and the clergyman sat at the farther end of the table, and I couldn't talk to him at dinner at all. He wore a sort of black silk tube instead of a waistcoat, in honour of the meal, and he had sandy hair, very smooth. He didn't talk in the ordinary clergyman's voice at all, but very fast and eagerly, in little jerks, shutting his eyes and pushing his neck forward and smiling. I talked about Cubism to the governess on my right, and about the fourth dimension to Miss Blake on my left, and felt I'd earned my dinner.

After the meal I was pushed up near Mr. Archer.

" I've so much wanted to meet you," he said, shutting his eyes tight, and smiling. " I so much value meeting those who—er—take your Aspect. I try to see *all* sides. I go *round and round*."

" Don't you get rather giddy ?" I asked.

He laughed his curious little sniffing laugh.

" Oh sharp ! sharp !" he said; and I swore to myself I'd talk sheer suet for the rest of the evening.

" I know it's not indiscreet of me," he said, " if I frankly tell you how interested I am to hear that you're putting the Roman position to our friend here " (Blake scowled at that, I thought), " and I was so impressed to think that I could meet a modern thinker who had made the Reconciliation."

" What reconciliation ?"

He looked at me suspiciously for a moment.

" Between the results of modern scientific criticism and the dogmas of orthodoxy, need I say," he answered.

" I really don't know that they need reconciling," said I.

" But *how* interesting ! You mean the conclusions of science and the assertions of the creeds move in different spheres, on different planes ?"

" Oh, partly. Sometimes. For example, anthropologists are always talking about the Fall. Well, they shouldn't. The Fall was a supernatural event, and no amount of research into the history of civilization will ever come upon anything which directly concerns it."

" But," said he, rather less gushingly, " you mentioned the word ' supernatural.' Now what exactly do you mean by that ? Can we any longer assert its existence in view of modern knowledge ? Or,

if we do, must we not *mean* by it something really different from what they used to mean ?"

" What *did* they mean by 'supernatural ' ?"

" Oh, take miracles for an example," he said. " Now if there's one thing we *can't* believe in the old sense, and I'm sure you, like all intelligent people, will agree, it's ' miracles.' "

" Look," I said, " I'm sure the servants want to clear away, and they'll be expecting us upstairs pretty soon; and really, to embark on the philosophy of miracles and get it over in five minutes is too much of a good thing. Shall we put it off ?"

" Oh, they don't expect us to go upstairs," said Blake. " I told them we were going to have a yarn, and since you have to go back at 10.30 you can just go up and say good-bye. It's all arranged. We'll go to the smoking-room. I really want to hear this."

So we trooped off to our fate, Reggie and I sulky beyond words, and the clergyman enjoying the prospect of wiping the floor with me, to the greater glory of the Unknowable.

Old Mr. Blake went upstairs and so, thank goodness, did Blake's younger brother, so there were only the four of us.

It was all hideously formal. Blake sat down on the padded railing before the fire, where I wanted to sit, too, because the early spring was nearly as cold as midsummer; but I was put in a large chair, one side, and Mr. Archer in a large chair on the other, and Reggie sat, very surly, on a middle-sized chair between us, opposite Blake. The centre-point of this group, however, was a little round table for our coffee cups, and there was some curaçoa, so I felt somewhat pacified.

" I can't conceive," said Mr. Archer, still with his eyes shut, and putting the tips of his fingers together, " why you make so much of miracles. All religions profess to have had them. What would they prove if they'd existed ? Nothing."

" Let's circumscribe the topic," I said, " to Christian miracles. It's legitimate. In reality, there aren't many rival claimants. One or two worked by ' Emperor's-touch '—Vespasian, wasn't it ?—a paralytic whom he touched and who walked. A few by Apollonius of Tyana. And cures said to have taken place in the clinic-shrines of Asklepios. But those are very few, very badly off for evidence, and they occurred in a setting quite different from that of the Gospel miracles. Frankly, I don't believe there's matter there for argument. You can't be sure enough of what happened."

" As a matter of fact," said Reggie—it was amusing to see how

resolutely he refused to join in the discussion, but addressed all his remarks to me, seeking an authoritative Yes or No, which annoyed Mr. Archer worse than anything else did, all the evening through. "As a matter of fact, *could* there be pagan miracles?"

"I don't see why not," said I. "I don't see why God shouldn't work a miracle on behalf of anyone in good faith and with good will. Unless, of course, the miracle was claimed to prove something false, or for an immoral purpose But whether there were any, I don't believe you can ever find out, now. But I see no reason to reject, unexamined, a miracle worked, say, on a modern Protestant, who asked for it in simplicity, and relying on the promises of Christ."

"But have you any better evidence," said Mr. Archer, "for the Gospel miracles?"

"You have," said I. "But since we can't possibly talk about anything and everything, not, for example, about Biblical criticism as well as miracles, let's stick to miracles. And I say that there's as good evidence for the Gospel miracles happening as there is for any other events related in them; and by miracle I mean here, an event quite beyond the combined result of the laws which normally govern human life, and worked in connection with the historical character Jesus Christ, and usually *in function of* His claim to be the Messiah and God's spokesman, and often directly offered as a proof that in claiming to be that, He was claiming what God, by such a miracle, could guarantee. And you must let me assume what really I think you ought to, nowadays, that the literary evidence is good, and that whatever the nucleus of the Gospels may have been, it included—they all admit it now, don't they?—the narrative of certain outstanding miracles."

"They were surely the product of the myth-making spirit of the times! Of a conviction that the man they thought to be Messiah *must* have worked such marvels."

"Well, *was* there time—first, to invent such myths; then to convince the Apostles, who'd been there with Christ, that the miracles had happened; then to impose such a belief on the Christian folk? After all, they weren't, I imagine, so very different from the rest of the world; yet, when much more 'successful' claimants to Messiahship than Our Lord was came along, the world did *not* surround them with a halo of invented miracles. I don't believe in this craze for inventing miracles. I see no evidence for it. It's only talked about because some reason has to be found for calling the Gospel ones myths. When people did invent miracles, and

publish them, for example, in the Apocryphal gospels, they were pretty quickly turned down. But, after all, I don't see why you *want* to deny that the things happened. If you think the Gospel miracles are too remote to study properly, look at Lourdes. The same things happen there under your nose—except, I confess, resurrections from the dead, or stilling a storm, or multiplying loaves."

"Oh, ah, Lourdes! But that's easily accounted for. The power of suggestion in functional derangements is limitless. Hysteria can be cured by hypnosis; and the effect of the will of the crowd upon these semi-hysterical paralytics and what not is an ample explanation of what happens at Lourdes."

"But can that be said?" Reggie asked me. "I've read quite a lot about Lourdes. I quite understood that no one now was permitted to say that hysteria or nerves or all that sort of thing was sufficient to explain Lourdes."

"Not unless you can say that cancer, lupus, Pott's disease, very advanced consumption, broken bones, very deep and suppurating ulcers, and so on, are nervous illnesses, and can be cured instantaneously by a nervous shock. Here is a minimum, Mr. Archer. If your philosophy allows you to deny the existence of matter or the reality of time, then I think you can extricate yourself from the miraculous character of what happens at Lourdes. Large masses of living tissue appear instantaneously where there was none before. Caverns in lungs are filled, with *living* tissue, and instantaneously. Now, even if it could happen that such living tissue should come into existence, by way of nutrition and assimilation, it would happen slowly however much you speeded it up. For it to happen instantaneously, you require the action of laws which medicine knows nothing whatever about and can't cope with; and that's exactly what the supporters of the theory of miracles say *do* act."

"Well," said Mr. Archer, "I've not been to Lourdes, and I can't test what you say. But why shouldn't it all be due to unknown natural laws, and not God at all directly?"

"I'll allow this. If it's not due to God, it's got to be due not only to natural laws which you don't know, but to natural laws which contradict several you do, as I've said. Now why are you *driven* to assuming that must be how the Lourdes phenomena are worked? Because you start with a determination that there *shall* be no supernatural events, and so, if an inexplicable event occurs, you say, without any evidence, 'I now see Nature can not only do more than I thought it could, but what I was sure it couldn't. Sooner

than admit divine agency, I'll scrap all I've got of scientific certainty hitherto.' "

"Look here," he said, "let's be honest. I'll tell you exactly why I can't admit miracles, quite independently of evidence. To my mind it's impossible, and it's immoral for God to interfere with natural laws. If He works a miracle, interferes with nature, for the sake of an individual, well, it's gross favouritism, and it's confessing He'd made the world badly in the first instance; and again, if even one miracle has been worked, still more, if God is liable to work miracles, so to say, well, everything's thrown into uncertainty, and there's an end of science."

"And let it rip," said Reggie, to the ceiling this time.

"We have not all the same amount of intellectual detachment as you seem to have, Mr. Orwylstree," said Mr. Archer, rather acidly. "Some of us value science."

Reggie puffed smoke rings, and said nothing.

"About all these laws of nature," said I. "What's a law of nature? It means that you watch natural objects and observe that they always act in the same way, in the same circumstances. Push a stone over the edge of the window-sill and if there's nothing to stop it, it'll always fall. Leave it lying on the ground, let nothing touch it, there it'll stay. Well, an architect comes along; he sees the stone, he takes it, and, according to a quite different kind of law, that by which his mind works, he knocks it into a shape, and what is more, into the proper shape for a particular part, say, of a Cathedral. The stone doesn't instantly start yelling out: 'You're interfering with my laws. Let me alone. Don't bully me!' The architect's *not* interfering with its laws, but bringing his mind's laws to work in with the stone's laws; and a perfectly different result takes place to what would have been had the stone and the architect never met. And observe, the result succeeds only if *both* obey their laws perfectly —if the architect's mind gives way, the Cathedral won't stand up; if the stone was soft, and good for carving into a cornice, and suddenly acted 'illegally,' and made itself hard, it would be a bad carving; and if it really were hard, and was meant to be used as a foundation, and acted softly, it would crumble, and the building fall, and all would be spoilt. So here you get a certain result by one set of laws being brought to work in with another set of laws; the result is utterly beyond what stone-laws could bring about by themselves; but they've not been interfered with; and if you know both sets of laws you can make a perfectly good scientific statement of

what's happened. So if God, whom we believe to exist and to act freely, chooses to bring a higher set of laws to work in with *our* set, a result else impossible occurs, but nothing unscientific or arbitrary. And as for what Mr. Orwylstree said about science, well, as I said, there are different sorts of laws; for instance, moral laws; and I'd certainly far rather ascertain a moral law than the law, say, which governs telephones. I prize both sorts, but I'd willingly sacrifice physical science to moral knowledge."

"Would you really?" he asked. "Can one be so sure at all that one ever *possesses* moral certainty?"

"The less you are sure," I said, I fear rather primly, "the less you must permit yourself to say what God *ought* or *oughtn't* to do, whether by way of a miracle or not. I've even known some gentlemen who said they discerned what miracles in the Gospels or in history to accept and which to reject, by their moral sense. They corrected the Gospels by their conscience. It never occurred to them to educate their conscience by the Gospels. Until you know all the circumstances, and that's the full contents of the soul for whose sake the miracle is worked, and all its future, how can you possibly venture to say whether God *ought* or *oughtn't* to lift *its* system of laws into active conjunction with higher systems, with Himself in the long run? If there's anyone arbitrary in this department, it's the man who says God *can't*, and God *shan't*. A little humility!"

He sighed, and I felt kindlier towards him.

"Don't you make the whole thing harder for yourself," I said, "by trying to take one 'miracle' at a time and trying to explain it away, and then the next, and so on? Or, at best, by thinking of them simply as odd conjuring tricks done to make you jump? Oughtn't one to keep one's eye on Our Lord's miracles, anyhow, as a group, and, in fact, as a series, and as done in connection with a certain teaching and also a certain character? It is true they can be looked at as signs—as popular proofs, 'omnium intelligentiæ accommodata,' as the Vatican Council said, 'suited to the ordinary mind.' But, now look a little further. Suppose you believe—as surely you *do* believe—in God as what Our Lord told us to think of Him—as a Father, a Heart absolutely yearning with love for His human creatures, yearning to communicate Himself to them, and happy of any excuse, so to say, for revealing Himself to them, isn't it likely that on every occasion we let Him, He'll manifest His power and love, and bring *more* order into the world, a richer

order, and I daresay more quickly? And if you believe, as I can't help supposing you do, that He'd made a tremendous invasion into our world in the person of Jesus Christ, if He'd made that sort of breach in the closed system we so wantonly keep building up out of our tiny knowledge of one sub-department of nature and its laws, isn't it likely that His love and power would come penetrating into our world through all the chinks and crannies, so to say, as well as through the great central channel of the *Person* of Christ? It's possible, as I said, to work up to Christ's personality through the miracles, but when you've got a knowledge of Christ, can't you work back from that to the miracles? You ought to see all these things in function of one another, prophecies, miracles, Christ. If there had been a quantity of prophecies about someone who turned out to be no one in particular, neither very good nor very influential, like you and me, or even influential in a worldly way merely, as Julius Cæsar, or Shakespeare, then one would be right to be biassed against the prophecies, and see if they weren't easily explained by flukes, or mistakes, or in some other way. And if someone who was immoral, or just neutral, with nothing special about him, started to work miracles—Napoleon, or Wellington, or again, you or I—well, you'd be right in hesitating to believe in those miracles and struggling to get rid of them. But when you know what you do of God, and that He wants to win souls to union with Him, and love for Him; when you see how, *anyhow*, He lived in, and was revealed in, Jesus Christ, then it's not wonderful that He should have kept making people *want* Our Lord; should have promised Our Lord; should have kept saying Our Lord was coming; and when He did come, should constantly and most lovingly and most beautifully have acted through Him, not only as *little* as possible and in one way only, but as much as possible and in all the ways."

"I didn't know you would still speak like that," said he. "It's quite different from my habitual line of thought. Can one really," he asked, not smiling now, "talk of the *love* of God and mean anything by it? Isn't it our human way merely of reflecting our own feelings and wishes on to God? Haven't we built Him up in our own image? For what *is* God? How can we *state* Him? And Christ—seriously, can one be expected to feel love for anyone who died 2,000 years ago? He was a beautiful character, one may be sure, and one can use much of what He bequeathed to us, as example; but even He was limited, subject to the errors of His own time, and I daresay faults. But enter into personal relations with Him?

Let us be glad if what we feel may have been His spirit is alive in our own hearts, and foster that as best we may."

"I say," said Blake, who hadn't spoken yet, "would it be frightful impertinence on my part if I asked how you can carry on as a—in your profession—if you think that sort of thing? At least unless I'm mistaking you altogether."

"I do very little active work, Mr. Blake," said the clergyman, suddenly opening his eyes quite wide. "I am—well, a student."

"But, look here, you took the services last Sunday. And I know you preached, because the guv'nor told me—I'm afraid I've given myself away rather badly; as a matter of fact, I was playing golf; but then, well, I don't *profess* to—oh well, the point is, how d'you manage it? For instance, when you say the Creed?"

Mr. Archer shut his eyes again.

"It would be tedious if I took each article of the Creed and told you how I can truthfully recite it. The Resurrection! Well, is Christ dead? Is not His Spirit, as I said, still living? He is risen then, and He works among us. And the despised Galilean is worshipped by many millions. He has triumphed, more than is given to most men. Is not that an Ascension? A sharing God's throne? The Trinity? Well, I own I have never been much interested in the numerical aspect of the Trinity. But need I go on? I can preach the eternal truths of science and of morality. And as a clergyman, I can lead many who are tempted to throw all religion overboard, owing to modern difficulties, to the spiritual equivalent for the old dogmas. I can re-state the ancient faith. Indeed, I feel that," said he, with his quick little sniff and smile, "to be my special job."

"And a damned rotten job it is," said Reggie, flaring suddenly, "if you'll forgive me saying so. I'm a younger man, I know, and not a scholar, but at least I've got a knowledge of what the average fellow feels, and I tell you, with all due respect, what you say won't wash. If I came to you and said, 'Was Christ born of a virgin?' *you* ought to say, 'No, He wasn't.' 'Did He rise from the dead?' 'No, He didn't.' 'Does He know or care anything about me now? And can He help me?' 'No, He doesn't, and He can't.' Then we'd know where we were. Then you can start out clear, putting your collar on the ordinary way round and presenting yourself as a don or a doctor or what you like, but *not* as a minister of the Church of England. Go and try your stunt on the ordinary man. Try it in the army. See what happens. They did try it, lots of 'em.

Some of 'em washed it all down to what you do; some of 'em tried to put it on a sort of John Bull or Billy Sunday level—called Our Lord ' a good sort,' a ' gallant gentleman,' and what not; and I tell you it disgusted them. Sharp eyes they've got. First-rate sense. See through it every time. The Catholic priest comes round; and he says, ' Lads, you've committed a lot of mortal sins, very likely, and if you're not sorry, you'll go to hell for it and lose God for ever. But you know what to do. You know how to make your act of contrition, and how to go to confession, and I'll give you absolution in God's name and then you're clean and free. And then I'll give you Our Lord's Body and Blood in Holy Communion, and I'll offer the adorable sacrifice of the Mass for you, and you'll go off and try to do better, and if you're killed you'll go to Purgatory, and the rest of us'll pray for your soul.' Knew where they were, *those* priests did. Gave 'em something to bite upon. And the Protestant officers or N.C.O.'s, who might be taking the parade, knew it, too. Modernism? Wash-out. Keep it for Cathedral towns and universities. Don't give it to *us*."

" My dear Mr. Orwylstree," began Mr. Archer, rather bewildered, " I wouldn't *think* of giving it to you; I'm only too envious of your serene and childlike faith—I——"

" Oh *lor*," said Reggie, getting up. " Look here, I apologize, sir. You have your way of looking at things, and it's not for a layman like me to criticize. Blake, I'm excessively sorry for making a scene. Shan't occur again. I'll get out my old bike if you don't mind, and hop it. Bye-bye, Father."

And he disappeared, quite forgetting the family upstairs.

Blake was driving me back in the side-car, and as the hedges tore past us, he said—feeling, I take it, more at his ease while doing something, and in the dark:

" Look here, padre, it impresses a chap like me more than a little when he sees a man like Orwylstree, who's *not* a pious sort of weakling—well, when he sees him care like that for his religion. Makes you see *someone* feels there's something in it. Better than yards of arguing. I'm glad I asked him. The parson had begun to make me feel rotten. Orwylstree put it right again."

" You may realize, some day," I said, " that he's doing more than you guess, just now, for the sake of his religion."

" Is he, indeed?" said Blake; then he continued: " And I tell you this. I'm saying my prayers regularly. Not much, you know, just the Our Father and—well, damn it, why not say?—

some prayers for my people, and to be good, and a jolly old hymn or two, something which I'd learnt as a kid. And I've started reading odd bits of the Gospels, just as I would any other book, you know, just to see what happened. And what—what Christ was *like*. Quite a new idea to me."

"And what," I said, "d'you feel He *was* like?"

The motor bicycle swerved slightly.

"I'm not quite able to talk about it yet, padre. Sometimes it makes me feel rotten, and sometimes—well, sometimes it doesn't."

But we had come to Wilchurch, and drove noisily through the old East Gate, over which the Angel knelt, uttering his eternal Ave to our Lady, and announcing to the weary millions of humanity God's Incarnation.

Chapter X

THE spring was still new when I received a letter from Miss Silver. She had lost her way near Paddington, looking for a Barmaids' Rest-house she had been told to visit in that neighbourhood, and, turning down a side-street, to her amazement, she saw the tawny forelock of the Corporal flickering over the counter of a small fried-fish shop; and when, above the door, she read the simple legend FRANK'S, she felt so sure that it was he that the audacious woman entered, introduced herself as a friend of mine, and enquired the way. She and the Corporal had, evidently, a most pleasant conversation, and she explained to me exactly where the shop was; so when, rather later on, I missed my train at Paddington and couldn't get home, anyway, till late, I went off to try to track him down.

The shop was tucked away behind the station, as she'd told me, in the sort of district where you didn't expect slums, but where things are pretty bad, and the worse for their dingy wash of respectability. His little street, however, was less respectable than most, and you felt less morally suffocated, whatever you might think about the smells. I visited him rather before what I thought would be closing-time, and decided to take the last train home.

It was a tiny place; the shop itself, and a cupboard of a room behind it. However, I saw a fire flickering in there, and it might have the elements of cosiness. One gas-jet flared in the shop, and an ingenious system of tin reflectors, which he'd obviously invented, gathered the light and cast it down on the sloping marble slab in the window. The fish looked rather blood-curdling; but the sight of the Corporal under the gas encouraged me, though I couldn't resist pausing a minute to read the head-lines of his price list, placarded by the door.

FRANK'S
FRIED
FISH

AS SERVED TO

H.R.H. THE PRINCE OF WALES

IN HIS DUG-OUT AT G.H.Q. HELL, NEAR YPRES

BY CORPORAL FRANK NEWNES.

(Late of the 107th Middlesex Regiment.)

Aghast at his inventiveness I entered. And I found an elderly lady saying earnestly to the Corporal:

" And as I says to Mrs. 'Olmes: ' If you can't be as good as you should, be as good as you can,' and ' Mrs. Barrett,' she says to me, ' if we all 'ad the same noble sentiments as you, Mrs. Barrett,' she says, ' different indeed would be the world, Mrs. Barrett,' she says."

Here Mrs. Barrett fixed me with a hazy eye.

But the all-seeing Corporal had long ago observed me. He leaned across his counter and shook hands violently.

But Mrs. Barrett interposed.

" Though not wishful to interrupt, Mr. Newnes," she said, " nor would I so far demean meself nor afflict me own affairs upon the reverend gentleman, declare I will, and none shall stop me, that if that there Welfare Visitor were a *Visitor*, give me burglars. Flounce into me room she did, as I were sayin', though flounce is not the word, such is the petticoats they wears nowadays, nor I wouldn't condescend meself, nor do I believe they *'as* none, but when I says petticoats I mean them skimpy skirts as wouldn't make a coverin' for a bird-cage tho' not to *you* would I be sayin' it, Mr. Newnes, bein' but a bachelor, nor yet the reverend gentleman. But in she come an' 'as a envelope in 'er 'and wot's marked Urgent by the Council, and ' Mrs. Barrett,' says she, ' your Anna Jane 'as got to 'ave her teeth see to this instant an' I'm come to fetch 'er.' An' ' Ma'am,' says I, ' teeth it may be or teeth it may not be, but see that pore child suffer I will not, nor yet vaccinated, which if it be not flyin' in the face of Almighty Providence I asks you but to tell me ! But see that there innercent child settin' in the dentist's chair an' bein' tortured I could not, nor I will not.' An' I'll make bold to ask the reverend gentleman 'ere, bein' a gentleman as I sees well, 'avin' been brought up so meself an' most select, ask you I does, Mister, if I was wrong."

" Perhaps, Mrs. Barrett," said I, timidly, " if the Council marked it ' urgent ' it meant that your little Anna Jane's teeth were really very bad. If she didn't have them seen to she might get poisoned all through, you know, and . . . and . . . her little face come out all over spots," said I, with a really fine flight of imagination.

" And if them was not my very words to Mrs. 'Olmes," said she, surprisingly. " ' Mrs. 'Olmes,' I says, ' look at your own little 'Epzibah,' says I, 'er bein' Particular Bible Christian an' namin' her family accordin', ' that's worse spotted nor a Christmas slice, an' never been near the cruel dentist, such is your tender 'eart.' "

" Quite so," said I. " Perhaps if she'd had a couple of bad teeth out, she might have been saved all those spots. That's what I say."

" That's what you says, is it ?" exclaimed this astonishing woman, turning on me with much ferocity. " And 'oo may you be, Mister black-coat, which many a decent widder 'as more right to it than you, when all's said ! Sidin' with them Welfare 'ussies invadin' of the 'ome as the 'tecs themselves would think twice on afore they ventured. Spots, is it ? Spots to you, as has never 'ad a mother's 'eart, which even my fourth has it, though not a day more nor thirteen, an' when I says to 'er, ' Amelia,' says I, ' if *you* 'as the face 'an the 'eart to take yer little sister to the dentist, take 'er,' says I, ' an' never look me in the eyes again. For see 'er suffer I will not !' an' with that she ups an' she screams an' ' Never arsk me, Ma,' cries she, ' never you arsk me, for see it I could not nor could I ever bear it.' Purple she was afore she'd done, an' the neighbours as was standin' round the door, they 'ad to smack 'er cruel between the shoulder-blades afore she give over, an' Welfare Winnie she pick up 'er skirts an' she run for it, an' as for 'er 'at it would have disgraced the 'alls," said Mrs. Barrett, dabbing her eyes.

" Look 'ere, Far-ther," said Frank, at last getting an edgeways word in, " you 'op it fer a hour or so an' then we'll 'ave closed down, an' peace an' quiet will reign once more in me little 'ome. You come back, Far-ther, an' you an' me'll do our bit of yappin' by our lonesome. You 'op it."

A prolonged wail from Mrs. Barrett followed me out into the dark, and I left the unfortunate Frank to make the best of her hysterics. I felt sure he was competent. When I returned the little window light was out, and the street was silent. But through the glass I could see into the inner room, of which the door stood open; and there was Frank, sitting and staring into the fire. Even when I entered the shop he didn't hear me. In the firelight the shadows of his stooping face were very defined. They started up by his eyes and followed the hollows of his cheeks and passed into the strong lines scarred downwards by his mouth. He was always thin, but he looked thinner, like that, and the lines very marked indeed. His face was curiously grave; not despondent, not anxious, but somehow very serious. I paused a minute, spellbound by the sense of his personality, his lonely selfhood, as he sat with his elbows on his knees, hands clasped, and stared into the fire. The world fell away around him; nothing mattered, for a moment, that was not he. I was so frightened, somehow, that honestly I almost retreated;

I couldn't break through the invisible things that fenced him; it became impossible to feel that anything less than God and His angels, and sin, and hell, and heaven were concentrated there. Yet he never moved, but sat, very grave, watching the red glow.

In a moment he felt my presence, and sprang up, grinning. I went quickly in.

"Don't light the gas, Frank," I said. "Let's sit like this."

A kettle already was whispering on the fire; and he produced, to my surprise, the whisky promised long ago, though not, thank goodness, in the threatened quantities.

"Wot price Mother Barrett?" he enquired. "Fair ole bilious attack, ain't she? An' yet again she ain't. Got a good 'eart, she 'as, though selfish, when all's said. But without knowin' it."

"I expect you get a number of customers like that, don't you?"

"Ah," said he. "'Tain't the right locality. Give me the East, the genuine East. Not but what the South ain't bad, 'specially near the river. Dirtier? Well, that's as it may be. Reckon you won't find much dirt round *my* little dug-out. Fair old 'ousemaid, I'm becomin'. That's where I'm different nor what I were. But, Far-ther, you 'xamine them respeckable residences round about with their lil' white curtains an' lil' bookays o' sham flowers, an' I reckon you'll find 'em fair greasy with the dirt as is in 'em. Curtains? *I* 'as curtains, as you can see fer yerself; but nothin' doin' in the curtain line if I couldn't afford to 'ave 'em washed. An' flowers? Give me a honest marigold, yes, or a carrot-top, if I carn't 'ave roses. But calico? Not Frank Newnes, *Es*quire."

I got up and wandered round the room. It was almost bare, but certainly, no fal-lals. I had never expected this.

I picked up a paper-covered book from a low cupboard, but he jumped up and took it away from me.

"Not for you," said he, curtly, and threw it into a corner.

"Not but what," he continued, "Mrs. Barrett makes it homey for me, on *and* off, by 'er conversation. Whitechapel, she come from, and in 'er 'eart don't take kindly to the West. Bills an' Jacks and 'Erbs is 'er proper list; not these 'ere Claudies an' Cyrils an' Basils wot's crawlin' all around wiv collars an' cuffs *this* beat. If there was any Claude 'er way, it were her as clawed 'im," said he, and since his peculiar humour didn't mostly run to puns, I perceived he was forcing himself a little, and I tried to divert him into argument.

" I expect all the curtains and Cuthberts are symbols, if you see what I mean, of their wanting something *better!* Something prettier—something more dignified than what they've got."

" You listen to me," said he. " That's all right. 'Ope; that's good. Try; that's good, too. But not as they does. Take Whitechapel. There's lots of 'ope an' tryin' goin' on there. Fine it is to watch it. Courage? Believe *me*. 'Opin' they'll get through, spite of all. Tryin' to keep chin above the black water," said he, looking constantly at me away from the fire, but his head turning back and back to the red coals where he saw his vision. " Try they do an' 'ope they do, an' strewth if it ain't enough ter make a man believe in Gawd to see 'em. But they don't pretend. Or less. Far less. They knows wot they is, an' they *is* it; sweatin', strugglin', 'opin', tryin'; bein' downed an' up again; and 'elpin' an' laughin' an' no airs; but brothers, they is, an' sisters, an' better nor brothers an' sisters."

" It's good to hear you say so; but why can't I say the same for the Westerns? *They're* trying. They've succeeded a bit; but they're trying for better still. You can never catch up with your hope, Frank. . . ."

"True for you," said he. " For once I agrees with you. . . ." His wistful eyes, so different from the flashing squirrel's eyes of old days, still watched the splendid glow. " You never can catch up. . . . But this is what's the matter with *them*. They ain't tryin' because they want to *be* summat, if you takes me, but because they want to be wot the other ain't. 'Tain't love o' the better, s'much as despisin' the worse. They says: ' Thank Gawd we ain't East End! Thank Gawd we's Us!' An' they only try to *up* themselves a bit in order to be one ahead of the next man as is *down*. 'Ate, it is; not real 'ope. Pride, it is, an' a beastly stiflin' brand of it, not self-respect. Self-respects themselves, do the Whitechapelers, an' don't you doubt it. Tries to do the little bit they can; an' pals, if they succeeds, with them as didn't succeed. Do hanythink for 'em. But West? Huh! ' Keep meself to meself,' that's their motter. Keep me skirts off that nasty Mrs. Brown. Keep me bright Cuthbert orf Dirty Dick—an' I'll tell you," said he, " wot I saw no further off nor yesterday. There's a lady wot visits down 'ere, an' a good 'un she is, every time; but she limps, she does, like me, so I sympathizes. Limps. Very well. If 'arf a dozen of them damned Cuthberts didn't take an' limp down the street after 'er, an' talk in a eddicated voice to each other takin' of 'er off, if you follow me.

Now never would you have seen that in Whitechapel," said he. " Whitechapel way, they knows wot's wot. An' if a angel *do* come down their street, well, they recognizes it."

" Having a dose of the angelic in their own souls," said I. " What did you do when you saw that ?"

" Wot I did ? 'Ave a little war on me own ! that's wot I done. Knock their blarsted 'eads together, I did, an' more nor once. And wot I said ? Never you ask me, Far-ther; which it would 'ave made a 'erring blush."

" That would have looked very odd," I acknowledged. " Frank, what a Christian you are, after all."

" Huh !" cried he, sitting up, and on the point of a violent disclaimer. Then he sank together again into his chair and reached out his left hand, taking mine quite in the old way.

He continued quickly, still not looking at me.

" No, I ain't that. Never so far in the opposite direction. Reckon," said he, " you ain't goin' to catch up with yer 'ope neither." Once more gravity descended on to his features, as he watched the glow. I said nothing, and after a while he resumed.

" I bin into that old church of yours again, more'n once. I reckon it was offerin' me what you offers, and stronger than you do. I've 'ad to own up to this: your religion's a real thing, an' I've known it all along, only I'd kid meself it were 'umbug. It ain't 'umbug. Real it is, an' it were a real offer that there church was makin' me. Talked, that church did. Or, not talked, but somethin' queerer. Made me a genuine offer, anyways. An' it come thus. 'Twas it, or 'twas this shop. An' this I chose. See the winders of this old shop flickerin' through that there church's walls. . . ."

He paused again.

On the dark panes the firelight put faint reflections, and through them I could just see the arcading opposite.

" For my part, Frank," I said, " I can feel the Cathedral looking through the walls even of your shop."

He sprang up nervously, and pulled a red curtain. Then he returned to his old position, but didn't take my hand. He clasped his own together so hard that the knuckles glistened.

" It isn't the Cathedral *or* the shop," I said. " The two can go together."

" Not for me," he said, and was silent again.

" Have I ever seen such a fight," I began once more, " as between God and you ! I don't think you can conquer."

"Ah. Let me alone."

"How can I? And, anyway, it isn't I."

"When wasn't it you? It was a year of you in 'ospital, an' you ever since."

"I think that hospital was the happiest time of my life. And the holiest."

"That so?"

"And of yours, kid."

"Well, I won't say no. But you can't call me kid no more. I'm a 'undred year older since then."

"In hospital men often become very childlike. Just submit. No possibility of choosing, as far as outside things go, anyway."

"Ah! I've been choosing since then, sure enough. Fightin' even, for what I wanted."

"But it wasn't only happy because you couldn't choose about outside things. You could do a good deal inside your head. Pain shrivels up such a lot of secondary things. You get—or you *may* get—just a few simple big things left, clear of cobwebs and illusions. God, your soul, sin; you are apt to judge yourself, judge right, and show yourself to God. And then, to hope. . . ."

"Men's minds is weak things," said he. "Those is ideas as flickers through, an' not so strong as me shop-window through the church. For they flickers out in the daylight, and with a bit of health. And with no one to 'elp you fix 'em."

"Didn't you and I fix them at *all*?"

"You worried me some," he said. "But I wouldn't let on."

"Have they really disappeared?"

"Not when me leg 'urts."

"Does it much?"

"Times it does. But 'ope? I've *got* me 'ope! I've got me shop. Wot more do I want? Caught 'im up, old 'ope, I 'ave!"

"Is he what you'd expected?"

"No—'e *ain't*. Nothin's that, as I told you. But 'e's good enough. Now you 'earken. Us 'ere to-night. Ain't that good enough?"

I smiled a little ruefully, but he didn't notice.

"Well, then," he went on. "And is it same as we expected? Sure not. Remember me tellin' you 'ow we was to romp round 'Olloway, me king of the district, an' knockin' 'em all with the sight

of you ? Well, an' 'ow 'ave we met ? Inside of a Lockhart's. Inside of a church. An' settin' 'ere together in the dark, an' Frank Newnes a shop-keeper. Shop-boy rather. Doin' it all 'imself and as regular as a station clock. And 'avin' *chosen* it. Gawd A'mighty ! Choosin' it ! Old afore my time, by years *an'* years. Respeckable ! Gawblimey !"

" What about the little Irish girl we'd talked of ?"

" Aw. Marryin'. N-a-o-w. 'Twouldn't be fair. It's a gamble, this 'ere shop is, when all's said; and I couldn't bring a wife in."

" But aren't you lonely ? When your leg hurts. . . . ?"

" Lonely I always was, in a manner o' speakin'," he said. " Different. Even in me bright-an'-merry days. Even when girls was 'undred strong around me. Never a one would I 'ave spliced meself to, nor *could* 'ave. Couldn't. Nor them neither; scared o' me, some'ow, even when most lovin'. Quick change, there*fore ;* new one each week, an' never kept waitin'."

" Dear old boy. I *tell* you, there's only one thing for you and never has been but one. The Infinite; and the Eternal. And don't say you don't understand. You very well do."

" Only too well I know what you mean," he said, scowling. " Now you 'earken. Satisfied I may not be; 'ow should I be ? 'Oo's satisfied ? But *that ?* N-a-o-w ! An' don't you go thinkin' that I'm goin' to the dogs, 'cos I won't 'ave *that*. I 'as me will, and by me will I've got this shop, and by me will I'm livin' on it, an' livin' straight. Leastways, straight enough. Girls ? Huh ! don't worry me, girls don't. I'm through with them. Not but what—— But anyways, through with them I am, to show *you*. Show you I will that I've no need of your infinite nor yet of your eternal, as you likes to put it. Your old Church, it 'ad somethin' to say on that subject, and it made me the offer, I'd be lyin' if I said it didn't. But I said *N-a-o-w*."

" What did you mean when you said ' straight enough ' ?"

" Wot I've just told you."

" Well, aren't you in other ways ?"

" Well—p'raps you'd say not about one or two of the wheezes as I brought off in connection with this 'ere shop. Raisin' money in one or two little ways as I'd not go into the details of. Rumblin' this 'ere furniture, and one thing an' another. Not crook, exactly, it wasn't, none of it. But a bit—well, it'll all be paid back, never you fear."

"Suppose—suppose the shop went bust? Sorry for even suggesting it, but supposing it did?"

"Then it's good-bye Mr. Francis Newnes," said he, looking sideways at me, "for time bein' at all events."

"I think it'll have to be good-bye, anyhow," I said, laughing, and standing up. "Mustn't risk my train."

"Shall I come with you to Paddington?" he asked, without moving.

"Don't you worry. It's no distance. You go to bed."

I was standing behind him, and had my hands on his shoulders. He put up his own hands and took mine.

"I'm thinkin' of our last day on the river," he said. "Why couldn't we 'ave stopped there, ever and ever?"

"Perhaps some day you'll come back. I wrote to you that old Sergeant's there. And Jock's grave's there, and so's he, in a sense. Only poor old Hal's the other side of the world! But he's alive. He's doing good work. . . ."

"Can't go back," said he, with terrible truth. "Never *is* no goin' back. 'Twouldn't be that me. Don't you go calling me 'Corporal' never no more. Nor yet 'kid.' Better keep to Frank. I reckon I'm Frank still, though times I don't know me own self proper. But the Corp you used to come an' see in bed? No. That ain't me."

"Old philosopher," I said. "You're you, anyway, and that's good enough for me a thousand times over."

"Army!" he said, vehemently. "The war! I tell you, it bites right into me to think of it. I reckon I've gone dippy; but I *aches* with—with I dunno wot, when I remembers the jokes an' the 'orrors, and the camps an' the trenches as I thought was 'ell. 'Ell it was, for sure; yet I wish I was back. Wot a time! An' wot 'ave we made of it? Nothin'!"

"Make it, Frank! You've got the chance this minute. Decide quick. Go on. Choose. Every agony of the war was worth it, if you save yourself along of it. . . ."

He got up and faced round, and in his turn put his hands upon my shoulders.

"If it's to be, it'll be," said he, smiling very gently. "But not now. Can't. Will I some day? 'Oo knows. But for now, I can't. I never lies to you."

His smile died out. I made a little cross on his forehead and he accepted it. He turned back very abruptly and sat down. I went

out, but looked round, at the door, and was horror-struck to see him crouching there, his shoulders shaking. I didn't dare return; but through all the streets to the railway, and on the vacant haggard platform, and through the roar of the headlong journey homewards, I couldn't rid myself of the vision of the sobbing man; and not the fathomless black sky and the fields drowned in darkness seemed so lonely as his loneliness.

Chapter XI

IN the early summer the crisis I had foreseen occurred. Reggie Orwylstree wrote to ask if he could call in one night after dinner, and when he came I was shocked to see how ill he looked.

" D'you mind," he said, almost at once, " if we come right away to business ? Matters have come to such a point that I'm nearly going off my head."

" It's about Barbara, is it ?"

" Well, it is, in part. You know I've been in love with her for years. I asked her long ago, and she didn't say No, and I *think* she wanted to say Yes. But she told me it was out of the question for her to think about marrying as long as her father needed her so much. And she didn't think an indefinite engagement was fair. But if she'd been *really* sure, she wouldn't have minded that. She *wasn't* sure, I could see, and in a way I didn't mind, because I felt so certain it would work out all right if only I waited. And it was absolutely everything for me to *have* something like that to—well, to wait for, and occupy me, and so on. *Everything*."

" Well, aren't things going as you'd hoped ?"

" Father, I can't help seeing she isn't any surer. In fact, I can't help feeling that, if anything, she doesn't love me like—like that. And now here's where I begin to feel such a brute. I keep thinking she's *really* in love with Blake. Mind you, I'm not sure of that, either. But a lot of little things make me think so. And, of *course*, I love her far too much to dream of—of not *wanting* her to go where she really does love; though, my God, it's difficult to resign one's self to it. But that's not nearly the worst."

He got up and leaned on the mantelpiece and stared into the grate. He went on talking without looking up.

" What's so awful is this. I'm definitely sure she wouldn't marry Blake, or anyone, unless he was a Catholic. Now I told you Blake positively haunts me in order to question me about Catholicism.

He's always at it. And he's learning very fast. I think he'll *be* one."

"I see."

"But *do* you see?" he cried, with the harshness of real suffering in his voice. "D'you *see* that every time I help him, I'm cutting my own throat? D'you realize that whenever I make it easier for him to become a Catholic, I make it easier for her to marry *him?* I'm deliberately ruining my whole future if I do my duty, and instruct him. D'you *see* that?"

"Yes, Reggie."

"At times I feel as if I wished I'd never become a Catholic if I'm to be put through all this. Or I feel as if I wished I'd never met *you;* because you know what a rickety sort of Catholic I was at first, and how I slacked off after the first plunge, and never studied it up or anything. And then I met you and you put me through a lot of reading and made me carry on thinking and pulling myself together generally. And here am I, having to use what *you* taught me in order to teach *him;* I try to copy that method. And it works, my God! If only it *didn't* work! If only he was a rotter! But he's evidently sincere. He hates it, but he prays. He's going through a little hell, too. But with what a prize at the end of it! Everything together. The best of both worlds. And what's left for me? A heavenly crown, I suppose," he said, bitterly. "At times I *hate* Blake."

"You must have been very loyal in the past, Reggie," I said, "if God is asking you to become so like Our Lord. There was nothing He didn't have to sacrifice for the sake of our salvation. He knew that if He preached, He'd be heading straight for death. If He raised Lazarus, He knew He'd be finally signing His own death warrant. But He always 'set His face steadfastly towards Jerusalem.' He had a cup to drink, and He felt 'straitened,' ill at ease, *restless,* if I dare say so, till He had drunk it up. It was an awful cup: '*If it be possible,* let this chalice pass from Me.' And He sweated blood in His agony. But He said to His friends, 'Can *you* drink My cup?' They said 'Yes,' and He took them at their word. Or perhaps not quite! The bitterest of the gall He kept for Himself."

"I know it's a wrong idea," he said, miserably, "but I keep saying to myself, 'Well, He was God. He was all right, anyway. Nothing could happen to Him in the long run.' But I'm just a man. At times it's pretty awful to be a man at all. . . ."

" It's *because* you're a man that He became a man—a real man. *Really* man. Not pretending. Not just a disguise. The real thing all through. . . ."

" He didn't have to do this, exactly."

" His heart was worse broken. . . ."

" He seems to ask for everything."

" He *gave* everything first, Reggie. Be heroic, it's a chance that mayn't come twice. Do the right thing. Christ asks you to help Blake to the Faith. To salvation. Think of that only. Don't think of consequences. Do Our Lord that service."

" But—oh, I can't explain ! It makes me feel *sick*. I loathe the whole idea, if you see what I mean. How could I put *heart* into it ? How could I go on arguing, explaining, trying to do it well when I knew that the better I did it the more I was committing a sort of murder on my own life for ever and ever ?"

" I know. Don't imagine—Reggie, please don't imagine—that because I'm a priest, and this problem exactly can never trouble me, that I don't understand. It's not easy for me to suggest the heroic way to you. In a way it's harder, because I feel I sit comfortable here and am advising such a thing to you."

" Yes, yes; I know you're all right. You'd *have* to say what you're saying, anyhow."

" Listen. I'm sure you'll remember Jock, the Scotch lad I took you to see that time when you came to the hospital with me. You know, he went through an agony of his own. You know he was simply living for his girl, and she chucked him for an Australian, and the Australian came to that very ward. And not only he never let him guess, but he made himself especially friendly to the Australian, and he went through a perfectly frightful crisis of despair before he died. It was a sublime heroism. He's a hero, and with the Saints, I'm sure. Ask him to help you. Yes, if you'd *seen* him before he died, desperate and dying without having really tasted life . . . having sacrificed everything for nothing . . ."

" Yes, but don't you *see !* He *was* dying. He couldn't have got anything more, *anyhow*. But I've got to live. I've got to empty out my whole future. And how *can* I do it ? How can I possibly live as I should when the one *good* thing in life is denied me; when *I* deny it to myself ? It'll be awful for me not to be able to marry and live as I want to. I'm not strong enough; I'm not really. How can I get along without *any* satisfaction, without hope even ? Even if she chucked me, it would be tolerable. I'd leave her free to;

I'd respect her. But it's so wanton ! I have equivalently to chuck *her*, and see her with him, and—when all the while I'd fetch and carry for her on my hands and knees, if only I could be with her. It's asking too much."

" Listen; we must be careful. It's not certain, yet, that she *wants* to marry you. Nor that she'd marry Blake, Catholic or not. And suppose you dropped him, and suppose he *didn't* become a Catholic, and that she would have married him if he had, but agreed to marry you because he didn't—well, you *couldn't* have put up with second-hand love. And, put it at the worst—if it is the worst ! Suppose he becomes a Catholic and she marries him—well, you've offered your supreme sacrifice and you suffer. But it *is* the difference between time and Eternity. You've done a thing which'll increase your union with God and Our Lord, since you obviously do it for their sakes *only*—no selfishness *can* come in; and you'll win for her —oh, anything you like to ask, I should think ! And what *won't* you have done for *him*. So your eternal union will be incomparably more intimate with her than ever your marriage could bring about."

He sighed very heavily.

" Oh, well," said he, " I'll do it. I never meant not to, you know. Still—it *is* my life that's at stake."

" I know," I said. " And you'll have given your life for your friend."

" I can't honestly call Blake my friend."

" I didn't mean Blake," I said.

He turned round and looked hard at me under his level brows. Then he turned abruptly back.

" I'll tell you what I'd like," I went on. " In three weeks I'll be giving a Retreat at Hayland. Come and make it. And bring Blake."

He sighed and said, " All right," and then went away.

* * * * *

The weeks flashed by, and the three of us found ourselves in the train for Hayland. It was all rather strained, I thought; conversation was difficult. Reggie had never made a retreat before, and, of course, Blake hadn't; they were both rather strung up and doubtful what they were in for.

Hayland hasn't much of the rich fields left from which it got, I suppose, its name. It is a manufacturing town, and very opulent and self-satisfied, except in the places you don't see, where the houses tumble down and crush people, perhaps just when the money-

kings are dining in hotels not five hundred yards away. But the retreat house lay well outside the town; you taxied first through districts most desolate and grey; endless grey houses, where flamboyant posters put the only colour, and where the open spaces were the play-yards of poor-schools, vast sheets of asphalt, with iron railings round them, innumerable rods riveted into the low brick walls. You came at last to a square, graced by the statue of some philanthropist, a clock and a drinking fountain, and then the suburbs began, red brick and yellowish stone and shining encaustic tiles. Clipped holly hedges surrounded feudal castles, complete (you felt sure) with loop-holes and portcullis, built seventy years ago by some potentate, since gone bankrupt; massive gates with wrought iron lamps above them opened on to rolled gravel drives, hedged again with laurustinus, rhododendrons, and more holly; you caught glimpses of the turreted garage, or lawns, with their monkey-puzzle trees and geranium beds. . . . These, too, we passed, and at last the real country came, beyond where the trams stopped; and we had been fortunate to acquire a great farm, very old, with wide fields round it, adjoining the ground of a little Catholic church which served that neighbourhood.

We disembarked, and forgot everything else in the business of arrival; the great living-room already had some half-dozen men in it, smoking, rather shy at first, but cheery and glad to meet us. From then till six, other men kept dropping in—chiefly miners, and men employed in small businesses, and clerks; one or two successful persons; a policeman, a music-hall artist, and a publican. But at four we began with a generous tea; bread and margarine, and two enormous cakes, baked on the premises, very plain, but hot. Tea unloosed their tongues, and friendliness, at the end, was well inaugurated.

After a cigarette we went up to the attic which had been turned into the chapel, though the Blessed Sacrament was not yet there. Then I explained what the retreat was meant to be.

I told them the story I had long ago told to the Corporal, about Tomlinson, the man who came to nothing, who never thought his own thoughts, who made no choices of his own, but drifted, and ended nowhere. Impossible that we should consent to sink so low. Yet life is an effort, and we get tired. It is fatally easy to accept, merely, the ideas of others, the conventional view; to let oneself be pushed about by circumstances, never to master one's life; to be no true *self*, in thought or will. Nearly all these men had been through

the war; that, in itself, had made personal thought so hard; had made effort, now that the army's pressure was removed, often impossible. And since the war, what national chaos! In consequence, what despondency! How little principle, how much sheer search for the momentary pleasure which should compensate for the day's drudgery, and cheat a future which might be disastrous and was, anyhow, so uncertain. . . . The retreat was to evoke thoughts—real thoughts, true personal convictions, and put them in due order; and was to brace the will—to build up the whole personality.

Then I explained very briefly the supreme importance of silence, and then said we would go to the church and bring back the Blessed Sacrament.

The men lined up outside, taking with them a cross and the two candles. Reciting the joyous mysteries of the Rosary, we went to the little church, sang the *O Salutaris*, and returned. As we walked, we sang the hymns *Sweet Sacrament*, and *Jesus, My Lord;* the evening was warm and still; the sun, not setting yet, was more golden and more mellow than in the afternoon, and all the peace of an evening in early June was round about us. Incomparably sweet were those brief processions through the field and gardens; the most simple faith breathed in them; all the men knew that a Presence had come to the house that was not there before, and that they had been its escort. Several spontaneously stayed in the Chapel to adore its Occupant; the rest went out to the garden to smoke, or I showed them where their rooms were. There were six single rooms, including mine; the others slept in two rooms which had been arranged as dormitories.

At half-past six they returned to the chapel and had their first real "meditation," upon man and God, and the *why* of man's creation. They isolated themselves; they were each a lonely self; neighbours were forgotten. And God was recalled to them; Infinite Spirit and Eternal; yet intimately present; alone truly present, now, to each. And He had made them. Why? Made them, and was preserving them. Had preserved them till the war, and through it. They had not fallen. And had placed them among a chosen few, the chosen minority of Catholics in this land; and from among Catholics, had called them out into this strange week-end; out of the hundreds of thousands in that city, they were the only men—perhaps some, out of their town or village, were each the one man—to be thus in retreat. And why? We refused, for the time being, to answer the

question, and they remained kneeling in the twilight chapel, confronting that terrific, probing mystery. . . .

I found Blake, and asked him if he were all right. He looked rather dazed, but answered "Yes." In a few minutes the bell rang for supper.

It consisted of mutton-pie, rice pudding, and jam, bread and margarine, and tea. Simple enough, but the food was cleanly served, and the table gay with flowers. I insisted on that; it cheered the men, and made them think better of themselves. During supper, a miner from Staffordshire read from a book about the history of retreats, especially in this country. He read with immense energy and conviction, with a sturdy Cannock voice, and loved the job.

After that there was a half-hour's recreation, and I selected and coached my staff for Benediction. The policeman and the publican were altar-boys, and I gave the incense to the plutocrat manager of some immense linoleum works near by. (He did it very badly, I may say, and was much chaffed next day by the miners, who knew their ceremonies backwards.) So at 8.45 we returned to the chapel; Reggie played the harmonium, and the Staffordshire men sang with the real beauty and force I always expected from them. Immediately after Benediction the answer to the "Why?" was given; the old-fashioned answer: God has done all this that we might save our souls. Not waste them. Become the reverse of Tomlinson; become the complete man, natural and supernatural, God wants us to be. And because in the tiny week-end retreats, which were all that these men could afford—and even that meant sacrifice—we had to hasten, we at once mentioned Death, not as a melancholy and depressing topic, not as a *finish* to existence, but as exhilarating, a stimulus, a reminder that this great enterprise of salvation had its time-limit. *Now* was an interspace, a break in the midst of our years, so that if life so far had been squandered, if I have risked losing myself, I may quickly recover, and start succeeding. . . . And the vision of their own lives was summoned to their memories; they saw themselves children, boys; making their first communion, offered by their mothers to Our Lady, consecrated to Mary, never forgotten by her, prayed for by her at that "now" which is each moment of our lives. . . . It was here, I always noticed, that the men first really *sank into* their retreats; they still sat motionless, eyes riveted on the speaker, missing not one word, but the consciousness of attending, the explicit resolve to be doing the thing well, had relaxed; all went on naturally, and minds flowed spontaneously in the channels

of these old thoughts which life had weakened perhaps and dimmed, but now revived—powerful, compelling, and yet peaceful. They felt themselves still *they*, still the children they had forgotten they ever *could* have been; still with Jesus loving them, and with their Mother. So, after the *De Profundis* for the souls suffering in Purgatory, and their own night prayers, they went slowly up to bed.

The house became quiet and dark, though the windows still held the amethyst June twilight, and from the wide, fragrant country floated the scents and gentle sounds of evening; distant cries, the voice of a child, of a song, came too; transformed, etherealized, not injuring the great tranquillity.

In twenty minutes I looked into the dormitories to say good-night. I asked new-comers if they were liking it; they grinned up at me from their pillows, honest faces, towselled mops of hair, great children lying there, to be put to bed, and tucked up and blessed. They were all happy.

I went then to the single rooms, where I had put men with whom I thought I'd value the last few minutes of each day alone. Not yet were they quite at ease; the morrow had its apprehensiveness; confession still awaited them; but they felt, I guessed, that everything would be well, that the effort would not be cruel. Then I went to Reggie. He was still sitting at his window, letting the night air bathe his thoughts, and the silence speak to them.

"Better turn in, Reggie," I said.

He looked at me without speaking, and in that thin light the shadows under his eyes were very dark.

"It's going all right, isn't it?"

He smiled half ruefully.

"It doesn't give a man a chance," he said.

I was too awestruck at the thought of what God was working in his soul, to talk much. I asked him to say some prayers for me, so that I shouldn't do anything wrong in the course of the retreat. He got up, smiled, and began to undress. So I went on, at once, to Blake.

He was sitting on his bed, half undressed. I perched myself on the end of it.

"Well, Geoffrey," I said, "who'd have supposed, when we originally met, that ten months later I'd be sitting on your bed—respectfully telling you to shut your eyes and go to sleep like a good boy?"

"I'm not a bit sleepy," he said, with a grin.

"Well, you ought to be. You've got to sleep eight hours solid. But tell me first if you're feeling pretty comfortable."

"First-rate," he said, briskly. "Enjoying it no end. Got the wind down, anyway. I tell you I had it properly up when we arrived."

"How d'you like the men?"

"Gorgeous chaps, aren't they! By Jove, what one loses, only knowing one sort of man. You saw what fine fellows they were in the army, even, but as an officer you couldn't really get at 'em. Nor in my present job, of course."

"You got on all right at recreation?"

"Absolutely. No difficulty whatever. Palled up at once. I couldn't have believed it of myself. But they took me naturally, and so I took them naturally. How's it done? I believe this is absolutely the only place in England where it could happen."

"Oh, there are other retreat houses besides this one."

"Well, only in retreat houses, then."

"I daresay. And d'you like the retreat itself?"

"I'm not properly *in* it, of course, yet. But I say, it's a terror for forcing one to look facts in the face! Why am I here? What's life *for?* By Jove, I'd never thought of it before. I've been a perfect kid in life! Hopping round, enjoying it, grousing, thinking I was a man of the world—but, well, as I say, I'm a perfect kid. It ought to last for a week, though, this sort of thing. I shall only just be getting into it when it's time to leave."

"I know; it's a pity. But the men can't help themselves."

"You know, I'm *not* really into it yet! I feel as if it was all going on around me—I'm looking at it—I agree to all of it—but I'm not *living* it exactly. . . ."

"I think you will, to-morrow. But I also think you must look forward to making your first real Catholic retreat some day. You know, you want the Sacraments. . . ."

"Well, padre, I expect you're right. Orwylstree's been telling me a good bit about 'em. I see their point. And look here, padre!"

"Well?"

"How about—well, confession? Can you hear mine?"

"I can't give you sacramental absolution yet, old boy. But we can talk about what you like."

"Well, look here. Could I make a sort of informal one to-morrow? Get a lot off my chest unofficially, so to say? And get some advice?"

"It might be quite a good thing, if you like," I answered.

"Then that's that," he said, satisfied. "I wanted to ask that."

I smacked his head gently, made a little cross on his forehead, and went. . . .

Next day, Mass, and then breakfast. Breakfast was porridge and bacon, and the Staffordshireman finished reading about retreats, war-time retreats this time. About ten, the hard work began. This meditation was on sin; always pursuing our ideal of building up, sin was represented as destructive, as crippling, as defiance of the whole law of life, mercifully revealed by God to us in conscience, and through His Church, for our success. . . . After the talk, and the few minutes' quiet thought upon it, I entrusted the men to the plutocrat and made him take them, saying the *Sorrowful Mysteries*, to a statue of Calvary in the garden. Then they separated, and walked or read. Meanwhile, their visits began; they sat and smoked and talked, one by one, and as usual I felt that never in my life should I be able to admire enough the amazing force of the *lived* Catholicism, the sturdy growth pushing itself up in souls distracted by Heaven knows what complications of our modern life! The frightful entanglements of business; how to be honest and succeed? How cope with rivals, how make a prosperous home; how *associate* almost, with your fellows in the trade, or the firm, and not violate Catholic justice and truth? Yet they put up the fight; yet was the unseen, unadvertised, unexhilarating sacrifice of sheer money, for the sake of righteousness, going forward bravely in that smoky, sweating town. And in family life, what secret heroisms! What obedience to the Catholic law of marriage; what self-control; what renunciation of little social glories, little haloes of this school or that to which children were *not* sent, because their faith would be endangered. Trivial glories? Tinsel haloes? Perhaps. But it needed a strong will to keep the mind's eye clear for realizing that! So to retreat they came, to purify the sight, to give the will its tonic. And the men from the pits, fighters mostly, tempted to be drinkers —clean-lived, they mostly were. And one but lately from the navy, where chaplains were hard to come by and Catholics were more than usually isolated, and when spells on shore meant, for most, only two sources of enjoyment. What fights for their chastity! What dogged tolerance of ridicule! What good-will to be lonely! One or two were despondent; the struggle had been too hard, or seemed likely to become so; others had failed, and found the work of

the retrieving of their innocence appalling; others, again and again, were thrown, and mauled and half-slaughtered (they would feel) by sin. One by one they came, and left after their talk refreshed, the load removed, ready for God's own healing Absolution.

But there was another meditation before dinner. And since we had promised ourselves to *leave no fact unlooked at*, we thought first of the eternal consequence, *possible* for all of us, of sin; not merely misery and disease, but hell, and the *self* become waste-product, due for the refuse heap. But at once I related to the men Our Lord's story of the prodigal, and, as always, it was here their faces showed, not only that the retreat had invaded and possessed them, but that it was picking them up, building them up, putting them on their feet and setting them to walk over a road however rough towards the Fatherhood of God.

Dinner, which was solid and helped out by a dish that looked like tipsy cake, but wasn't; and cider to assist digestion. The reading was the children's book of stories about Our Lord, which I long ago lent to the Sergeant. Then recreation. Blake found himself playing stump cricket with the miners; the plutocrat himself took a hand, but was no better as batsman than as thurifer. The music-hall artist, a man of a profoundly doleful countenance, which he altered suddenly, at long intervals, into a singularly charming smile, did solemn tricks with coins and bits of string, and ended by tying himself up in a quite alarming knot, for he was also a contortionist. But, on the whole, the men's week of work had tired them; they liked to lie flat—for the day was glorious—and watch the wide sky, and smell the grass. The only real incident was caused by a certain wild young miner, called Mick Brophy, mounting an aged horse which, you'd have thought, not Etna in eruption could have scared into activity, but which abruptly woke up, careered frantically round the field, and deposited the exultant youth into a hawthorn hedge. They spent the rest of the day picking the thorns out.

Geoffrey Blake and I wandered off to a stile, and we, too, watched the butterflies and flowers, and absorbed the country. He related his life, but, I kept feeling, almost more as a history told for the first time, more as something *not himself* he was handing over, than in the way I wanted, and he needed. Similarly, I felt he was getting the retreat itself as an interesting outside thing, on the whole, and contemplating even his own conversion as a new thing he might possibly *do* rather than as a new thing he'd *be*.

So I told him I'd explain the topic we'd been speaking of, during

the next afternoon talk; and I resolved to be bold, and tell him that night what, after all, he could so easily have guessed for himself, what Reggie was really doing, from sheer love of God, when he seemed to be just instructing him. I knew Reggie would trust me.

We had, therefore, our afternoon conference out of doors, sitting round the Calvary. Never, one would think, can a man hear some subjects, that so poignantly concern him, discussed, save in a tainted atmosphere, and amid what are blasphemies, in truth, of God's great laws of life. They emerged, always, from that conference, joyous, expansive, difficult to control; and I let them talk at tea.

After the Glorious Mysteries of the Rosary we had the evening talk. It lasted long, and was about Our Lord, His Humanity, His intimacy of friendship, and yet His Kingship, His Kingdom, and the Crusade of that Kingdom against sin and all evil. What though the Crusade meant humiliation, often enough; suffering, possibly even death? He had borne it first; He asked nothing save what He had given; He had had His Passion; He had died. Christ's Christians would not shirk that, they would ask for it. . . .

At once, after this meditation, the Blessed Sacrament was exposed. The men, in couples, made a Guard of Honour, and each couple watched before it in silence for a quarter of an hour. Many had doubted whether they could occupy themselves for such a space; none found it difficult; many outstayed their watch. Reggie, when once or twice I looked in, seemed always there. In that time, heart spoke to Heart; Christian to Christ; soldier to Captain; friend to Friend. But what they said was wordless, and rarely would a man speak afterwards of what had been done, nor would I ask.

At supper the story of the Passion was read; and after Benediction a short final meditation was given, chiefly on the Sacraments, and on the duties of a Catholic life, especially to one's fellowmen; and resolutions—very brief, but powerful—were outlined.

Such men as had not yet made their general confessions, made them after that, and soon the house, once more, sank into quietness.

Reggie was again at his window. He turned round when I came in, moved a step forward, and took both my hands.

"It'll be all right," he said. Then he said: "Give me your blessing."

I blessed him and he nodded, and turned back to the window.

I went to Blake.

"Hullo," he said, "come and sit down."

I established myself on the edge of his bed.

"Well, how goes it?"

"Fine, thanks! And I can't tell you how grateful I am to you for fetching me along here."

"You really liked it?"

"Oh, it's a great experience. Everyone ought to be put through it. Wish it lasted a week. I promise you I *will* come again when I'm a full-fledged Catholic."

"D'you think you've made up your mind to be one, then?"

"Well—yes," he said, a little more soberly. "It seems to me incontrovertible. I don't see how I can get out of it. Old Orwylstree's done the devil of a lot for me, you know. Fine chap."

"You really think you'd be doing grave wrong if you *didn't* become a Catholic?"

"Oh yes. I've gone too far to turn back with impunity now."

"You really *value* it? You're not just afraid of seeming inconsistent? I don't mean to me, but to yourself."

"Look here, you once asked me what I'd do if I became an R.C. and Barbara chucked me. Well, I'd stick to it. And I'd go on further. If she chucked me *now*, I'd still become an R.C. I can't say more than that, can I?"

"That's certainly saying a lot. Listen. Suppose it meant your being cut off with a shilling. You and Barbara couldn't live on what you get for your job. And suppose she'd got no personal income. I don't know what she's got. But say, nothing. Well, becoming a Catholic would mean you couldn't marry her. *Would* you become one, then, if she said she'd marry you as a Protestant?"

"I don't think it's fair to ask me that. It's life or death to me, marrying her."

"D'you think you could love your faith more than your life?"

"I wish you wouldn't ask. I don't know. Does *anybody?*"

"Geoffrey. Now, listen to me. You say Orwylstree's been helping you a lot. I don't think you realize what he's been doing. He loves Barbara, and has loved her for years. And as deeply as you do, old boy. At *least* that. And if you'd not appeared, I think it would have been a clear course for him. I expect they'd have been married by now, or engaged, anyway. But he thinks she wants to marry you. I don't know whether he's right. But he's sure, and there he *is* right, she won't marry you unless you're a Catholic. Well, every word he says to you, to help you to become a Catholic, is a knife into his own chances, see? Every step he takes you towards the faith is a new death warrant he's signing for himself. At least

he thinks so. So you see. He's done that because he loves his faith better than himself, his life, and Barbara. He believes in it *so* much that he'll work to give it to you, at *that* cost. It's been absolute hell to him; he felt he couldn't go on; that's why he came here. That's been what he's been up against in this retreat. And he's triumphed, or God's Grace in him has, for it was superhuman."

He lay absolutely silent. At last he said:

" That's a knock-out. Perhaps you'd not mind going and leaving me to think this out. No. Don't go. Stay a bit, but don't talk."

I remained till I had said a Rosary. Then he rolled over on to his side, but still said nothing. I made the sign of the cross on his forehead, and said good-night.

Next morning the Mass was said early. The men all made their Communion, and then tramped off to the local station or the trams, into the difficult world that was no more so difficult, since God went with them.

Chapter XII

EARLY in July I received a frightened little letter from Miss Silver, saying she'd gone to Halbutt Row, and that the Corporal was gone. The fish-shop was still there, but with a different name above it. She had gone in, but the man had been rude, and had refused all information.

I went up to London as soon as I could, and managed to get to the place, as before, about closing time; and there, to be sure, was "*C. McCurdy,*" in large letters, above the window.

The burly unknown man behind the counter appeared surprised when I went in. I certainly didn't look like a customer for fish.

"Excuse me," I said, "but can you tell me where Mr. Newnes has gone?"

"F. Newnes?" he queried. "'Opped it this couple o' months. Bit behind the times, Mister."

"How do you mean, 'hopped it'?"

"Bust. Sold up. 'Opped it. Na poo," said he.

"But have you any idea where he is?"

"Me? 'Ow should I? 'E can fry in his own fat, for me."

"But look here; he was a great friend of mine."

"'E was? Sorry for you. Don't think much o' your taste."

"Oh, well, he suited me all right. But you'll do me the greatest kindness, Mr. McCurdy, if you can help me to find him."

"Preach 'im a little sermon, would you? Save your breath, Mister."

"Look, Mr. McCurdy, don't worry about me, *please*. Cut me out. I want to see Frank Newnes. If you know where he is, I'd be extremely grateful if you'd tell me. You mayn't have liked him, and perhaps he did you a bad turn. D'you mind if I ask you to forget it for a moment and tell me what I want, if you can?"

"Well," he said, "you speak straight. Pass into the back parlour, if you've a moment, an' when I've shut up I'll be along."

I went in and stared at the grate, now empty, where Frank and I had watched the fire. At last he came in.

"Will you 'ave a drop?" said he.

"Thanks very much."

"That's right," he said. "See you're a man after all."

Much as I dislike having my masculinity assessed by my capacity for alcohol, and though I absolutely loathe gin, I grinned and pledged him.

"Now about this Newnes," he said. "There ain't much to tell. Bit of a dark 'orse, Newnes. Don't know where he got his money from in the first instance. Bit 'ere and a bit there, I reckon, same as 'e did off me, me havin' picked him up through a mutual acquaintance on the razzle at Brighton as I thought I could trust. More fool me."

He then told me a complicated story about some financial arrangement, which I couldn't follow, but which issued, anyhow, in his having the right to claim the furniture, if Frank couldn't pay him by a certain date. I gathered Frank had failed with the shop, had given over the furniture and had sold what he could and paid part of his debts with the proceeds, and had vanished.

I sat silent, very depressed. Then he said:

"Now, then, Mister, I've told you what I know, an' it ain't much. But in return I want you to let me ask you a question."

"Right-ho! Fire away!"

"You say you're a friend of Frank Newnes. Now is that pulpit-talk, or d'you mean it?"

"I certainly like him very much and I think he likes me very much."

"Well, you couldn't answer straighter than that! But I owns meself beaten. A gentleman of your callin' an' Frank Newnes likin' one another very much? Gawd Almighty! It's a marvel."

"Why?"

"I *likes* you when you says 'why' like that," said he, slapping my back so hard that I began to wonder if he were a little drunk. "'Why?' 'e says, cool as you please. 'Why?' 'e says to me."

"Well, why? And why shouldn't I say 'why'?" said I, beginning to be annoyed.

"I'll tell you," said he. "One: because there's few as stands up to C. McCurdy in *this* street, nor yet in many another; two: because no parson's been known to do it, so far, anyways. But I likes it, and here's my hand."

"Here's mine," I said, more and more bewildered. "But I wish

you'd tell me why I oughtn't to like Frank Newnes. I thought most people liked him."

"Some did," he acknowledged, "for 'e's a tongue in 'is 'ead as'll make 'em laugh. But also 'e's a tongue as is a bit too sharp, and layin' into 'em he had been, lately, as I'm told, and more'n a bit. And as for language! Well, I heard 'im myself at *that*, and 'Eaven 'elp us, I couldn't 'old a candle to 'im meself, and I'm reckoned hot stuff at the language."

"It takes him like that sometimes. But with a lot of people, the more they talk, the less they do."

"Do? 'E done me, anyway. For that furniture didn't compensate me for what I give 'im, not by 'arf. And *do?* 'Arf the devilment o' the district was due to him, if you ask me. See the devil in 'is eye, you could. No mistakin' it."

"Oh, well, pretty innocent devilment. And I think he's quieted down a lot since his wound, and so on."

"Innocent? You ask the girls, Mister, and *you'll* hear whether it was innocent."

"I think you're wrong there. He told me—oh well, I think you're wrong. You haven't evidence, have you?"

"Ah, that's where the gist of the matter lies. All the girls of the place was mad for Frank Newnes, *Es*quire, with 'is gentleman's ways and his forelock; but 'e'd got 'em so well in his power that you'd not get one of 'em to own up to nothing, and as for 'im, give himself away, d'you think? Not 'e. Dark 'orse, as I told you. Sly. Evidence? Course not. But you don't take C. McCurdy in just 'cos there's no evidence."

"Well, let's give him the benefit of the doubt," I said smiling, and getting up to go.

He pushed me back again.

"Don't go yet, if you've not got to. This is a bit of novelty to me, 'avin' a parson sittin' in me parlour. An' before you an' me 'as our chat, I'll say this for your Mr. Frank Newnes. Generous 'e was; open-'anded to a fault. Chuck 'is money about reckless, while 'e 'ad any. Did a powerful sight o' good turns too, unbeknownst. Cropped up after 'e'd 'opped it. But when drunk, oo! You look out for yourself. Red in 'is eye, had Newnes."

"I'm glad you noticed that, Mr. McCurdy. I mean about his open-handedness. And you have to remember he'd been badly gassed, and also very badly wounded. It was a great shock to him. He was a highly-strung fellow, all nerves. And he'd had a

terribly bad time getting a job. And I expect when he thought he *had* got one—you don't know how he'd been looking forward to his shop—and then found it wasn't succeeding, it would make him very—well, unequal; up and down. I always told him he was an old cork. Push him right down, and he'd come up again. But if he goes down and stays down, it'll be a bad look-out for him."

"Look here," he said, "you ought to get out of that black coat an' dog-collar."

"I? Why? I'm a Catholic Priest and I——"

"Oh, *are* you?"

"Sure. . . . I never thought of mentioning it."

"Well, I don't know much about the Catholics meself. There's some as reckons they're the best of a bad bunch. But this is it: *you* ain't a bad sort, but I *'ate* your callin'. I *'ate* the Church. Ch - - urch!" he drawled, contemptuously. "Drown the lot of 'em, if I had my way."

"Well, Mr. McCurdy, you may think I know only one word in the English language, but *why?*"

He laughed, and hit me again between the shoulders. I'd been leaning forward, elbows on my knees. But I resolved to sit upright, from now on. . . .

"I'll tell you," he said, "an' I'll tell you straight. First: you're a Government department, see? Now I'm agin the Government. Therefore I'm agin you."

"Oh, I suppose you're alluding to the Established Church? Church of England. There's a lot in what you say. But we aren't like that, I assure you."

"You're not? How ain't you?"

"Two ways that I expect you'll understand. One is, we don't get salaries from the Government. Not in this country. I think we ought to. But we don't. But I ought to say in fairness that I don't think the C. of E. salaries are a very important item against 'em. Most parsons are miserably underpaid."

"Underpaid? What's this I 'eard the Archbishop of Canterbury's worth?"

"He *gets* a lot. But he has to spend it. He certainly has a very great deal to do indeed. Where *over*-paying comes in, if you ask me, is in the middle sort of crowd of dignitaries, who haven't much to do and *have* very comfortable houses in Cathedral towns, and so on," said I, thinking, I fear, of the Very Rev. Alderman Canon Chawner.

"There's a thing you said there which I'll come back to," said he. "But what's your second point?"

"One minute. Honestly, the Catholic clergy are *very poor indeed*. I can't think, in the whole country, of a class of men who do so much work for so little. I'm not alluding to exceptions, who are well off, or lazy, or both. I don't know any 'boths'! But to go on; I think you'll like this. We have our beliefs, and we preach 'em, and we have our orders and we transmit them and we obey them. And any Government in the world could hammer at us till it was sick and we were pulp, and we wouldn't obey if it was against our belief or our orders. Take a case. Divorce. The Government says people can be divorced; and ministers must re-marry divorced folks. *We* say there's no such thing as divorce. If the Government say, 'These two people are divorced, re-marry them,' *we* say, 'They aren't, and we won't.' And if we're sent to prison, or fined for it, well, we go to prison and we pay."

"Ah," he said. "I admire that. The *spirit*, mind you. Not what you say about divorce. I hold with divorce, and I reckon it's the Government's job to settle just them things. But if you're against it in your conscience, don't you let Government dictate to you. Good for you, there. But these parsons? Let the Government walk straight over them, *as* it pleases."

"Well," said I, "they are a State creation. Kings and Queens and Parliament began them. They didn't us. Christ began us. But they hate the position they're in, and if you ask me, they won't go on being in it; either a lot will come out, and come to us, or, they'll be disestablished, and God knows what'll happen then; it'll be the Church of England on its own, without props; and *I* expect it'll tumble down."

"Well, 'ere's my point two. What you said about them fine 'ouses. It's a society stunt, the Church is. Now I'm a socialist. Society and socialist, see? There's all the difference. If anything, I'm Bolshy. I'm full out agin the gentry. As a *class*, mind you; not this one nor that. Now the proof as the Church is gentry is, if you're down right at the bottom, you goes nowhere. Follow the Salvation band, may be; 'ang round a street orator; but go to church? Not them. Nor yet to chapel. Chapel's for the respectable class, see? The shopman. Me, if I 'ad religion. But religion? In the chapels? What a hope! Never nowhere such backbiting, gossiping, slandering, and secret muck as in the chapelgoers. Howsomeever, make a bit *more* money, shift your street a bit upper, an' you

becomes Church. Automatic. Class, it is. And worse. Here's me third point. It's tied up with what's *worse* nor class. An' wot's that? Money. Capital. Capital the Church stands for. Get a parson to hit out and tell a capitalist he's grinding the faces o' God's poor? Not him. Tell a director o' these big stores and the like they won't take 'is damned cheque because it stinks o' the blood an' sweat of the poor from whom he's wrung it? Catch *them!* Put up a decent show agin these 'ousing scandals? Tell a wealthy patron they won't drink 'is champagne when the women 'e rack-rents is too weak to feed their own brats? Drink the champagne every time, he will. And you say they're poor! Well then, *I* say, they're damn fools into the bargain, seein' as 'ow they *believe* in money and fall down and worship money, and can't get none. Incompetent. No guts. And here's me fourth point. *Look* at 'em! I says, *look* at 'em! And *listen* to 'em. 'Ur, me de-urr brurthren, the Lurv o' Gurd bids me curm to yer——,' ow, I *'ates* it. Cant. Pulpit mush. The men knows it every time an' 'arf the women knows it. I tell yer, there's more Lurv o' Gurd among a drunken cursin' troop o' navvies an' sailors and 'arlots, if you *will* 'ave it, than among *that* cantin' crowd."

"Well," I said, "thanks for saying all that. It's your view, and the view of a good many, and it's not the first time I've heard it. I'll own there's something in it. There must be, or it would never have existed. Or there was. I don't want you to think me a bigot, Mr. McCurdy, but it stands to reason, after all, that I believe the Catholic Church to be the true one, and, therefore, the other denominations *not* so good; so you'll not be surprised if I say that the faults you mention hardly exist with us, and never did to the same extent as they do—well, elsewhere. I recognize with you that the C. of E.'s a national concern in the sense it's restricted to this country—for it's quite different in the colonies—but say an *Imperial* concern, if you like; yet in another sense it's thoroughly *un*-national, for it represents nothing in the nation whatsoever, not even the Government nor the upper classes; it hasn't got a doctrine, nor yet a discipline, and it seems to me to be there chiefly because it's difficult to get rid of a large thing all at once. Mind you, I respect plenty of people who belong to it, enormously; I envy their qualities; I wish I used my religion as they do theirs. So I do any sincere person, trying to do his best. But as for the C. of E. as an institution, let alone the other sects, I can't see the point of it at all, except for pageants and organizing philanthropic effort.

And it's none too necessary for that, now. Look at the Y.M.C.A."

"Well, all this would carry more weight," said he, reasonably, "if you was C. of E. yourself. Bein' R.C. you feel 'em rivals, and go for 'em natural."

"We don't feel them rivals," I said. "There's no real *likeness between us*, as institutions. And I don't want to go for them; I'm stating just what I think I see."

"And I agree," said he, "but I'd lump your crowd in with the C. of E.'s, or would till I learned they didn't deserve it."

"We've deserved part of it, in this way. The Catholic Church is so absolutely sure that she stands for something unchanging, permanent, constructive, that her representatives have always hated revolutions, and have been apt to cling to what was established and conservative, because to that extent she felt it was like herself, and in sympathy with her. And since that sort of thing is what holds the money-bags and controls the armies and the police, some of her representatives have sometimes succumbed to the frightful temptation of *relying* on shekels and swords for help. But, as a rule, it hasn't been so. As a rule, the history of the Church has been one long struggle for the freedom of the spiritual conscience against coercion; from the days when Christians were massacred by hundreds of thousands for refusing to adore the Roman Cæsar; through the days when even Christian Emperors thought they could dictate as to who was to be Bishop, who was to marry whom, and so on; to the days when Kings tried to set up national religions which should be under their thumb, and succeeded in England to a great extent; on to our own days when the State tries to prevent us, for example, teaching our children what we believe to be the most important thing of all in Catholic schools, as they did in France and Germany, and even here. Christ against Cæsar, when Cæsar's against Christ, every time. And I want to be fair. Hasn't the Church persecuted heretics? Hasn't she burnt them? Hasn't there been a Spanish Inquisition? Yes. But I won't tackle those questions of detail now; I see you read," said I, looking round at book-shelves well laden. "I might send you something on that some day, to show you I'm not shirking. But now I'm out for the principle, not the more or less successful application here or there."

"Well," he said, "what if you ain't succeeded nohow? What I say is, what's the Church *good* for in any one department, *now?*"

"The Church is what she has been," I said. "In the first 300

years of her existence, not only she emancipated conscience from Cæsar, but she revolutionized *from within* the lot of slaves, of women, of the weak, even of gladiators. And in the second chapter of her story it was she, her Popes, bishops and monasteries who carried civilization forward at the moment when the Roman Empire collapsed, in one sense, at any rate, and barbarian invasions brought chaos with them. Through what are called the Dark Ages there was a good deal of light, and the Church upheld all there was of it. She saved the good elements of the past, held 'em together and created the new—namely, Christendom, Christian Europe. And the Middle Ages were the time when she most nearly succeeded. Everything, from art to hospitals, from guilds to universities, sprang up within her and by means of her; things were *better*, far, then—sheer social well-being was, intellectual energy was—than 300 years later, when nationalism and the anarchical movements in Germany had broken Christendom to pieces. I don't expect you to swallow that whole; I don't even want you to; but with all the qualifications I'd like to put into it, if I had six hours instead of ten minutes, it would still remain massively true. Look here! If ever we can arrange for having public lectures on this sort of topic in this neighbourhood, will you come? And will you bring your pals who think like you?"

"I will that," said he, "but you don't know what you're asking for. You'll get some rare heckling."

"Heckle away," said I, "and, meanwhile, go and heckle in Hyde Park on Sunday evenings, near the Marble Arch, where you'll hear the Catholic Evidence League putting it a deal better than I can."

"But you won't deny," said he, "that the Church has always been agin Socialism? Now *I'm* a Socialist."

"Socialism means so many different things. I maintain, Mr. McCurdy, that our principles are as *social*, that is, as constructive of a good Society, as any others, and better. It's partly our fault that you don't know that. I can't conceive why every Catholic in London doesn't belong to the Catholic Social Guild and *tell* you. Train lecturers and never have a district in London without its lectures going on. Oh, public lectures; undenominational halls, public discussion—free and open, and something Catholic always being told you. One month, social principles; the next, history; the next, philosophy, I daresay; the next, sheer explanation of our doctrine; and then social science once again. The responsibility

on us is terrible if we don't *tell* you. 'How shall they believe what they haven't heard? And how shall they hear if no one tells 'em?' St. Paul asked that 2,000 years ago, and, my word, it was a pretty obvious question."

"Well, as I said, pulpit mush don't go down nowadays."

"Well, am *I* talking pulpit mush? *Am* I? I don't consider I am. We've probably all got our mannerisms. No doubt I have. You have, Mr. McCurdy, you know. And one of them," said I, preparing myself, "is to slog your decrepit friends very violently between the shoulders."

He roared with laughter, and did it again. I knew he would. But as I sat up suddenly, he caught his hand very hard on the woodwork of the chair and said, "Damn." Then I laughed.

"Now look," said I. "The upshot of all this is, not that you should gulp down all this talk and at once become a Catholic, but you should resolve to know us and to *give up hate*. If you knew us, you'd find us allies very well worth having, and perhaps even guides. And any ally you can get, for the succouring of this unlucky world, you ought to exult in getting. Hate divides; hate destroys; hate falsifies all you look at; you can't see what you hate, *straight*; and it spoils the hater and tends to make the hated hate back, and that spoils *him*. We can't afford to quarrel, nowadays, we who *do* want to save the situation. It's an awful situation. You don't need me to tell you so. Never was there such a mental instability—minds that *were* stable, behaviour anyway that *was* fairly consistent, grown rickety and toppling. All the world's received a shock; all its framework was broken up, or it found, as in this country, that it hadn't even got a framework. No real principles. Just ways of carrying on; bad ways, often; good sometimes; but unprincipled nearly always. Revolt against the bad is breeding anarchy; the collapse of the good makes anarchy too. A slop; a mess. There never was so much hysteria in the country as now. Or cynicism. Or despair. There was sublimity during the war. It's been killed off. And sentimentalism—a debauch of it—*it's* lasted, in the shape of self-indulgence. We want the proclamation of principles; you may be sure they'll be unpopular. Labour has some; the Church has more. Labour's unpopular among those who have none; the Church is unpopular with that part of Labour which has too few and doesn't think out fully what it's got itself. So for God's sake let's join hands whenever we can, and join issue whenever we must. Then we may get somewhere. Meanwhile, *I'd* better be getting

to the station, else I'll lose my last train and have to come back and sleep under your counter."

"An' you'd be welcome," said he, grinning. "Mind you, you ain't converted me, an' I don't expect you think to 'ave done. But I take your point, and I sure see there's two sides to every question. An' I tell you I'll sure go to Hyde Park on a Sunday and hear them lectures. But let 'em look for me to heckle! An' when C. McCurdy o' Belfast and London heckles, it's *some* heckling."

"Oh," I said. "Belfast? Well, I'm anyway London, too."

"You are?" he cried. "An' there's nowhere like the old village, when all's said."

We said good-night, and between there and Paddington station I managed to say the Stations of the Cross for Frank, climbing assuredly a bitter Calvary, God alone knew where. I held my Crucifix tightly in my pocket as I recited the Paters and the Aves, and the indulgences rained cool upon the Souls in Purgatory. They prayed for their fellow-sufferer, that his suffering might be as theirs, cleansing, disentangling, sanctifying.

Chapter XIII

NEXT day I felt I wanted to tell the Sergeant about this. I didn't go straight to Barbara, to whose prayers for the Corporal I always trusted especially, because she had been looking so worried lately that I wanted to add nothing to the pressure that might be on her. Mr. Travers had been ailing for a long time, and the Sergeant had been transferred for quite three months from Mrs. Bolton's to the Travers's house, so as to be handy if he were needed.

So I went round to the Guild Offices after lunch, entered, and said " Oh," and stopped.

For there, in the window-embrasure, stood the Sergeant and Miss Silver, holding hands.

Miss Silver gave a little squeal and then shivered with laughter. The Sergeant looked scared out of his wits, turned brick red, and then grinned slowly behind his hand.

" It's evident," I said, " that I have to congratulate two very lucky people."

" Miss Ernestine Silver," said the Sergeant (and I jumped with delight. How could I have guessed she'd be called Ernestine ?), " Miss Ernestine Silver has very kindly consented to be my wife."

" And I do hope you'll forgive us," she implored. " I'd no notion it was going to turn out like this when I started coming, I really hadn't. I came most honestly to study your literature; and I really did miss my train the first time, anyway; and went on wanting to read your literature, but I began to want—to want—Jack to explain it to me, too——"

" An' I'm goin' to spend my life explaining it to you," said the Sergeant, with high sentiment, and he kissed her and she once more squealed.

My blood ran chill at the prospect of a life-time of lectures on social economics, even from Jack Raikes, but I applauded the general idea without reserve.

"I've not been received into the Church yet——" began Miss Silver.

"But it won't be long now," interrupted he.

"I hope not; and, of course, I couldn't think of its being done anywhere but here——"

"Nor by anyone save you, Father——"

"Oh, if you would! Then both Jack and I will have been—oh, it was *meant*. I'm sure it was meant!"

"And it'll be him that marries us," he resumed.

"And may the bull-dog come . . .?"

"An' Mrs. Bolton," he said, "will be the one that makes the cake." I remained blinking under this bombardment, which continued for another ten minutes or so, and at last I said that I thought it would be rather nice if I came back in an hour or two and then we'd all go round and tell Mrs. Bolton, and then Miss Travers.

So at a quarter-to-four I returned, and there they were, sitting in the window-seat, and what enquirers at the office had done meanwhile, Heaven knows.

We marched off, therefore, to Mrs. Bolton's, who held up hands of amazement at the sight of Miss Silver, patted the Sergeant in a motherly way, and then assumed an attitude of expectant resignation.

"Mrs. Bolton," I said, "this is no ordinary visit. Important events are occurring, and you are to be informed of them right now. Not another soul is aware of what you are about to hear save me."

"There now," said Mrs. Bolton.

"And two other persons whom you now see before you."

"Indeed, your Reverence," said she.

"An alliance has been concluded," I said, "between Miss Ernestine Silver, your late lodger, and Mr. John Raikes, ex-sergeant, your later lodger. In three words, they're getting married."

"Lord forgive us!" cried Mrs. Bolton, somewhat cryptically, "The lambs!" She then fell upon Miss Silver and kissed her on both cheeks and patted her hands, exclaiming, "The lambs," "the poor ducks," "the lovey-doveys," and other adjurations of a zoological sort.

"An' whether 'e'll 'ave it or whether 'e will not," she cried, "kiss 'im I will, as am old enough to be 'is grandmother, and proud would I be to be so if the Almighty 'ad so ordained an' me not married Bolton bein' no more than seventeen an' a mere girl—though look

it I may not, an' never so much as *met* 'is grandfather to my knowledge."

The Sergeant made no effort to disentangle these genealogical subtleties, but submitted with a good grace, declaring that Mrs. Bolton didn't look older than an honest thirty, and if he'd not met Miss Silver there's no knowing what mightn't have happened.

Whereupon Ernestine cried, "Oh, *Jack!*" and hit him with her gloves, and he deserted Mrs. Bolton and kissed *her*.

"An' seein' as Mr. Raikes," continued the landlady, "has removed to Mr. Travers's house, nor do I blame him, though better cakes than what I make not even that dear young lady could cook for him I *will* say, and bless her angel fingers—seein' as he's no more here, what's to prevent his sweet young lady spendin' part of her time afore the marriage in her old room, with her poor old landlady for chaperong, and them see one another often as they like an' no 'arm said. There's a lodger there now, I will say," she continued, "but a poor miserable creature he is, an' never so much as a 'Fine mornin', Mrs. Bolton,' nor a 'How's the indigestion to-day, Mrs. Bolton?' and go at the end of the week 'e shall, no sooner do you say the word, you dearie you!"

"And I must tell you, Mrs. Bolton," I said, "that Miss Silver's never going to be naughty again, and if you hadn't got a picture of the Holy Father in her room, she'd go out and buy one for herself. She's decided to become a Catholic."

"That's a dear, good girl," cooed the old lady, "as is much too pretty and too sensible not to know what's right and proper when she 'as the chance o' seeing it. Look at the reverend Father 'imself."

"Well," I said, "look at me if you like; I'm all that's right and proper, and I hope sensible, but——"

"Oh don't," cried Miss Silver, relapsing, and she enfolded Mrs. Bolton in her arms and said we must go and see Miss Travers.

"And may all blessin's follow you," cried she, dabbing her eyes with her apron, with extraordinary results, for her apron, like her hands, was floury, "an' give an old woman's love to that beautiful young angel an' may she take example from the two of you an' make poor Captain Regin.ld a 'appy man, for that Blake," she said, astonishingly, "is neither 'ere nor there. Let 'im seek elsewhere, for I wishes 'im no 'arm, nor would I, but my Miss Barbara 'e shall not 'ave, an' so I tells 'im, or would, if 'e was to ask."

So we got along to the Travers's, and Barbara was alone.

When we entered the drawing-room panic descended on the two

of them and they stepped behind me. I positively felt the Sergeant standing to attention, with his eyes above our heads, and I expect Miss Silver clutched his sleeve, his fingers being inflexible.

" Barbara," I said, at once, " I present to you two happy people. You've not met Miss Silver, I think, but she's often in these parts."

She shook hands charmingly with the girl, and then with the Sergeant.

" Sergeant," she said (for they all called him that), " I'd noticed you've been preoccupied for a long while past—now I see why !"

" I trust, Miss," said he, in an army voice, " that my duty has been in no way interfered with."

" Indeed, no," she said. " We'll always be grateful to you for your help. We've come to rely on you. But we shall have to give you a holiday now !"

" If I may make so bold, Miss Travers," said he, " and voicing the sentiment, I'm sure, of my wife that is to be, I shall esteem it a privilege to be allowed to continue any service I can be of, till the last moment. And may that be distant."

" The Sergeant," said I, " told me on the way here that he hopes to make his home in Wilchurch, so it's possible that he really may be of assistance to you for a long while yet, whether in exactly the same capacity or not quite, I don't know."

" In any capacity, Father, I would be proud," said he, " to be of service to Miss and Mr. Travers. And what I say, I've no doubt but that Ernestine says with me."

After that we all had tea, and the two lambs then departed.

" Isn't that too wonderful ?" said Barbara. " I don't mean her becoming a Catholic, exactly. But the whole idea !"

" It's great," I said. " And it shows what a really excellent girl she is, and how really simple. Because after all, it's not what you'd have expected for her. To start with she was as absurd as any of 'em, and as *un*democratic as you make 'em, as these dilettantes all of 'em are; she'd have turned up her nose at the real man of the people. And now she goes and marries him ! They've talked it all out, they say, and their ways and means, and she's been learning up housekeeping—oh, *and* keeping accounts—and he's explained she'll really have to work, and she realizes it all right, and she's willing."

" All the same," Barbara said, " I shouldn't wonder if he'll earn a good salary some day, especially if he improves at the pace he's going at. And with his pension, and a little newspaper work on her part, they'll get along. Oh ! we'll have her for the C.W.L."

" I love," said I, " to see this mating of idealism and common sense ! Miss Silver and the Sergeant, converts, and as keen as mustard in different ways—absolutely no *side*, now, about either of 'em !"

We paused; all this talk had been a little too deliberate. I knew she wanted to say something else. At last she said, " Father," and waited.

" Yes ?"

" Father, I don't think Daddy can live very long now. Then what am I to do ?"

" Lady Sophia would look after you," I said, for the sake of saying something.

" Yes, but that wouldn't do at all. No, Father, I've always thought I wanted to be a nun. And since Dicky was killed, I'm sure. But I wouldn't think about it while Daddy needed me. But now I feel dreadful about it. . . ."

She broke off.

I was thinking of so many things that I couldn't speak for a few moments.

" Help me a little," she said.

" It's not that you doubt your vocation, I think ?"

" No; I'm *sure*."

" Nor that you can't tell what order or congregation to join ?"

" No. The Poor Clares," she said, speaking very low. That, I confess, I had not at all foreseen. However, I left it, and said:

" Well, Barbara dear, there's no one living who has the right to prevent you."

" And I don't mean Reggie," she said, looking up and smiling.

" Then I think you mean Geoffrey Blake," I said, smiling too.

Her smile died right out, and she looked drawn and unhappy.

" It's more dreadful than you think. Reggie's such a Catholic that he'll understand. I can trust him. But Captain Blake isn't even a Catholic yet. If I go, will he become one ? And if I wait till he does, and then go, what will become of him ? I'm not vain, Father. I'm not really, but I *am* mixed up in his conversion; how can I doubt it ? And I can't tell him or anyone but you, as a priest, who's a friend, too, that I'm determined to; and if I let him linger on and on, so to say, and be converted, and *then* go—well, how can I ?" she said, flushing.

" Oh, Barbara, you don't want me to tell them, or to let them know sort of casually, that you're thinking of it?

"It would be cruel to ask you. But everything seems cruel just now." She paused again. . . . "And even as it is," she said, her voice going up a little, but she had wonderful control, "don't you see that it looks as if I'd been leading him on—I haven't, but a girl can't help feeling—oh, you can't guess what she must feel if a man thinks that of her—or even playing them off one against the other—being nice—I had to be nice, Father, hadn't I? And I've never once flirted. . . ."

"I couldn't imagine you flirting, Barbara."

"No, but they could perhaps. Or Captain Blake—won't he think I've merely been netting him for the Church? I couldn't bear it. Oh, why can't everyone be Catholics and see things from the inside? He'd know, then, I couldn't have."

"I think Reggie'd see him through it, Barbara. He has a cult for Reggie. And he's understood the idea of sacrifice. He's seen examples . . . and of loyalty. . . . He'll not suspect you. They'll both suffer; but they'll have one another's friendship. It'll draw them together, I think. It may—finish Blake's transformation."

She sighed. After a pause she said:

"D'you think I'm right about the Poor Clares?"

"It's a new idea to me. I'd have to get my thoughts rearranged."

"Life has been so very complicated," she said. "I feel I need a great simplification."

I couldn't help smiling.

"The Poor Clares certainly would provide one!" I said. "But you're young, Barbara. You mayn't always feel life's quite so muddled. The Poor Clares would be for all the rest of your existence. . . ."

"I feel very old," she said, and as she sat like that, with her delicate profile to me, she might have been almost any age, so experienced and calm was her look, albeit the late afternoon made her hair glow like the pheasant's feathers Jock had compared it to. "Since Dicky died, I feel that—well—that I've lived that part of my life, if it doesn't sound priggish to say so."

"But, seriously, doesn't Lady Sophia want you to live with her?"

"Yes, she does. But—I don't want to live in a castle—nor Curzon Street. I'd be all wrong there. I don't want that sort of society life, and Linborough is a perfect wilderness, and I couldn't even do C.W.L. there."

"Don't you think she might need you? She is very old. It would still be sacrifice, Barbara. First for your father, and then

for her. No one could call it selfish. And it doesn't really matter whether you wear satin shoes or go barefoot."

"If she needed me, I'd go. And the only human thing that could keep me out of the Poor Clares would be the cold!"

"Perhaps you might do both. She can't live very long."

"Isn't life strange? From death to death. Dicky; then Daddy, Aunt Sophia—we'd be waiting for them. Counting on them almost. One feels so unreal; somehow, I hardly feel I'm me. One's life depending on deaths——"

"*Ego sum resurrectio et vita*——"

"Oh!" she cried, suddenly animated. "I want to pray! I want the Divine Office! I want to offer myself! Every now and then sacrifice seems so *everything*, that I don't mind those two poor boys suffering—oh, Father! Don't say I shall have to sacrifice my sacrifice and marry one of them!"

"My dear Barbara, we're becoming almost ridiculous," I said. "I'll say Mass that God may clear up our minds, and you pray for the Corporal. I don't know where he is. I'm sure he's in trouble. I must find him—so pray hard."

Chapter XIV

I THOUGHT our prayers were answered when about the beginning of September I received a letter from the Corporal.

"Reverend Father and True Friend: Re St. Edith's Fair commencing Monday sixth and finishing Tuesday 10 o'clock I shall be there Father. Look out for Gorgeous Glancing Gondolas, that's us, some Gondolas you bet when they glances they leaves your stummack hanging on the off horn of the moon it's Truth I'm telling you. Well Father Here's the best of luck and I'll be round sure thing Sunday night we camping at Wilford Bridge ard by I have a lot to tell you you bet Father. Now Father dont you be away I want to see you I tell you I do for sure. Wishing you all the best old friend your sincere friend Francis Newnes. P.S. talk of the frying pan an fire what else is life so you be there Father mind, your old pal if you'll still ave me Frank."

I wrote hastily to say I'd be away till late on Sunday, but that I'd come out to see them putting up the Fair on the Monday morning. He answered by a card saying that he'd light a red flare at 5.45 prompt, so that I'd see where he was.

On Saturday night the heavy engines were deposited in St. Edith's, the broad street on to which our house looks. As usual, the heaviest were placed on our side, and exactly opposite our windows. On Sunday they plotted out the areas each show might occupy, and at exactly 5 a.m. on Monday the Fair began to arrive. I got up and went out, never tiring of the extraordinary spectacle. The poor sky didn't want to be woken up yet, and at first showed a dead sort of light, that was no light, and was outraged by the flaring orange-coloured naphthas, and the incandescent, violet by contrast; gradually the wan dawn increased, very austere and cold behind the flares. Enormous vans serpentined to and fro, backing with extreme delicacy, each into its own place. I wondered how on earth all this was done when it was managed by the help of scores of horses. Already the central parts of the merry-go-rounds were

in place, huge funnels on the top of each of which a serene youth always sat, smoking a cigarette. I never saw him get there, and how he did it I never knew. But there he sat, catching with astonishing accuracy the long iron rods that should support the awning, riveting them, fitting them into the gigantic spokes from which the cars were to hang, and which grew out skeleton-wise, with great rapidity, all round the shaft. Underneath, men were handling with a terrifying impassivity dragons, swans, and mermaids, at which quite a large crowd already gaped. I thought it was really time I lent a hand, for I had ended by feeling indignant at the aloof attitude of the onlookers. It is true that at the corner where the show-vans came in procession into St. Edith's, the crowd made awestruck comments. "She'll be *in there*," they all said, when the vehicle painted with the image of the Fat Lady arrived. But round the places where the actual work was being done it would have required a pickaxe to penetrate the apathy of the contemplative male. So amid the general disapproval I assisted elderly ladies in velvet coats to upheave all sorts of beams, trestles, and rails, and got, no doubt, very badly in their way. However, they professed gratitude, and I consider I built a large portion of that Fair. It was odd, I reflected, how ugly the majority of the show-ladies were, and how lean and good-looking the men. Men who have to do with horses or ships, clerics, judges, and actors develop a special sort of face and, in particular, of mouth; so did these men; they were lean, cynical, alert, yet tired; with sharp eyes, and lips melancholy, though controlled. . . . I liked the type; I was sure we should be friends (I exclude a beastly Professor claiming to be from a fashionable studio in Montmartre, and some soul-less voluble cheap-jacks; but these hadn't yet come to the surface); and good temper was already noticeable. When an on-looking lady got in the way, and a world-weary youth roared at her, "Now 'op it, mother, else yer feet'll be as flat as wot yer face is, an' that's pancakes," she would merely say, admiringly, "Well, ain't 'e the one for sauce!" and stay exactly where she was till he kissed her into rout.

But a sudden crimson glare shot upwards a hundred yards away. It was the Corporal. Advancing timidly in the wake of one of the groups of alarmingly competent young girls, who alone lent a squealing vivacity to the rather grim scene, I at length found a gigantic structure between *Lieutenant Smith's Amusements* (I was longing to find out what they were; poor man, he looked as if he needed them) and *The Original Oriental Orgies, Harem Houris and Omar's Odalisques*.

And there, at an incredible height, perched on the slender funnel, sat Francis Newnes.

"What-oh, *Far*-ther," shrieked he.

A vast crowd instantly began to collect.

"Come down, Frank," I shouted, in terror of this publicity.

"'E calls 'im Frank!" murmured the crowd, and I at once went up in their estimation.

Frank slung himself down by the web of iron rods; but since he'd got up there to put them up, I still was at a loss to guess how he'd reached his perch. He was in trousers, tennis shoes, and sweater, and looked haggard. However, he shook my hand till my wrist felt dislocated.

"*Knew* you'd come," he cried—"*knew* you would!"

"Of course. But couldn't we get somewhere private?"

He gazed round.

"Inside of the ingin," said he.

I crawled after him into the bowels of the merry-go-round, and we sat down on some very oily machinery, over which he'd spread a rag. He went on repeating that he'd known I'd come, and asking how I was.

"I'd no idea you'd taken on this job, Frank."

"Didn't meself till a month ago. The old boy wot owned it, crocked; and wishful to do me a good turn, me 'avin' invented the Glance, 'e 'anded it over to me on an understandin'. You ain't never seen it?"

"The Glance? The Gondolas? What d'you mean?"

"The Gondolas," he corrected me. "Triple motion. They rotates, same as any; an' they rocks; an' they glances. I mean they whizzes round, rockin' like as the gondolas do, an' then the whole business it suddenly slips back like with a most 'orrible jerk, leavin' your innards somewheres three feet in front of you. I invented that there glance, along of wot you told me they done to you once when you was flyin'. Glide up an' up quiet, and then, whpp! back yer goes sudden, *you* know. Some strain on the machinery, but most delish for the public. Fair loves it. But *you* 'ave free rides all the time, if so be you likes to. Free for you every time an' all the time, if so be . . ."

"But Frank, I'll be wheeling about spinal carriages all day. I shan't be able to leave them, to have rides, I'm afraid."

"As you please," said he. "Here's me, here's the gondolas complete with Glance, and here's you."

"Are you running this show by yourself?"

"Along with the Oriental Orgies," he said, curtly.

"Well, anyway, if I take a 'bus, and start back from the hospital at 10, I can be here about 10.45, and you and me'll have our yarn, won't we? We can manage somewhere, I expect. You all shut down at 10.0?"

"Oh yes; we'll have our yarn," said he, rather moodily.

Then we separated.

I arrived at the hospital at two, and collected a lad called Thomas Carter, who had been on a farm near Hanton before the war, and was now awaiting his twenty-third operation on his spine; he was still sheathed in plaster, and had lain in the same position for three years, now. However, he could wave his arms about, and you could prop his head up a little. We reached the Fair about three o'clock.

A church, broadways on, blocked the entrance to the wide street—it was quite fifty yards wide, I should say—and only after turning its apse did the full glory of the spectacle burst upon you. The uproar of the merry-go-rounds was such that all the music fused, and only when you were actually beside one, could you distinguish its tune. The Gondolas, as we passed—the Glance was terrific—were playing Rachmaninoff's *Prelude* in rag-time. Taken at a brisk pace, it sounded quite remarkable. The Corporal was nothing if not up to date. He also had the *Ride of the Valkyries* in his repertoire, and plenty of Barcarolles, also "ragged."

We moved slowly down the Fair, which took us a good half-hour, for the crowds were already dense under a blazing sun. Ice-cream stalls; photographers; rifle-ranges; coker-nut shies, and merry-go-rounds. Fortune-tellers, too, but we waited till later to sample them. Likewise the side-shows.

Having reached the extreme end of the Fair, we returned, and inspected the Mysterious Mole, the Gruesome Girl from Grinstead (she was a head, no more, floating in mid-air within a box, an illusion which I refrained from explaining to Carter till teatime, when I considered he had gloated over her gruesomeness sufficiently), the Fat Ladies (his comments were unprintable), and a good deal more of the same sort. Already the good nature of the Fair-people was manifest. No showman or show-woman would dream of letting me pay for the wounded boy, nor even for myself; actually, they once or twice uprooted poles, and upheld sagging tents to let the chair through an else too narrow aperture. And the crowds parted

without a murmur till I could wheel him right down to the front, and enjoy to the full at once the spectacle and the decisive perfumes of moles, seals, cowboy leather or patchouli, as the case might be.

Carter took the performances with placidity, but interiorly he was enjoying himself immensely. Once or twice, confronted by such mild improprieties as the Fair allowed itself, he murmured: "Silly, I call it," and once, "Childish." Once, too, when I explained why we'd cut out the Professor, he austerely began: "Them things didn't ought to be allowed. Now, when I was in France . . ." All the way to *The Last Hope*, where we now adjourned for tea, he kept up an account of his experiences over there, but I couldn't listen to him, as the job of steering the chair through the ever-increasing crowd absorbed my attention, and the angry music all round us drowned half of what he said.

But when we turned off into the High Street he was observing:

"But you mustn't say too much to them, when all's said an' done, seein' as human nature's human nature, an' works itself out regular, no matter what a man's opinions is."

"Opinions can help a lot," said I. "But you've got to have 'em And to have opinions which apply all the time and every time and don't cease to be true on Armistice night or Fair night."

"There's few opinions like that," said he.

But we turned off into the courtyard of the *Last Hope*. I often took wheeled chairs in there, because it was difficult to heave them into proper tea-shops, and, anyhow, the men preferred it. However, since it was not much past four, and supper wasn't to be till six, and Carter said he felt that he could fancy a ham sandwich, I bought him eight at the little meat shop next door, and he ate all of them. Meanwhile, I explained to him the illusion of the Gruesome Girl, and this, with the ham sandwiches and a glass of beer, made him thoughtful. I let my mind rest, in this old-fashioned courtyard, with its plaster walls tinted a warm apricot between dark oak; its Virginia creeper already turning every fiery tint, its evergreens in barrels, its gallery. It pleased me; and the westering sun began to fill it with calm splendour. The angry music of the Fair seemed whole leagues away.

Meanwhile, Ethel, who brought him his beer and me my cup of tea, made a discovery.

"How funny," she exclaimed, "but I seem to know your face."

She always said this; but now she was looking at Carter as if she meant it.

" Name of Thomas Carter," said he. " Farm 'and at Cotton's by Hanton, previous to the war."

" There now !" said she, " ain't that funny ? And me at Hanton too, ever since I was a little one."

They sparred for a long time, till he marked her down as Ethel Bennett from Perrin and Peach's, haberdashers. He used to bring in eggs. At every pause, and there were many, she murmured, " Well, now, isn't that funny !" and he replied with, " Queer, ain't it ?" This went on for twenty minutes, while I watched the sunlight.

At last he said, without any preliminary skirmish: " An' what about young Arthur Sparks, 'im as you was walkin' out with ?"

" He chucked me for Liza Nobblet," she returned, with equal serenity, " her what served at Edston's." Then she turned to me. " Walkin' out with him a matter of eight year, I was, an' on his first leave he chucks me for another. Tried to hide it, he did, an' keep the two on us dangling like, one on each little finger. But she *'ad* to crow over me, had Liza, it bein' thought none would be wishful for 'er, what with her figure an' then her ways being known."

" That was hard on you," I said.

Little tired wrinkles showed suddenly all round her eyes, but else she remained placid.

" She won't be thinkin' so much of 'im now," said she, " he havin' got his what-for, an' one side of his face shot away cruel, an' him being out of khaki an' started a moustache again to hide it, but lazy-like, him not carin' much about life no more an' leaves it ragged."

" Married, was they ?" he asked.

" An' quick, too. Funny, isn't it ? Walkin' out for eight years, an' me not so much as lookin' at another, nor yet wouldn't do, an' writin' to 'im regular an' sendin' him this an' that when I had a shillin' here an' a sixpence there; an' then, married in a fortnight. Well, I suppose it's natural, she makin' a dead set at him an' me gone off a bit through workin' real hard. Funny, ain't it ? Come natural to him, I reckon, an' didn't think twice about it. I don't wish him no ill luck. 'E don't want more than he's got, not with Liza Nobblet what was. But say, kid, ain't it funny, me meetin' you ? Tell us about yourself, boy. You was married, too, wasn't you ?"

" Ah," he said. " An' two kiddies as is now with me sister-in-law. Did the dirty on me, she did, and off with a Canadian Sergeant, through 'er not 'avin' no more use for me like this, an' my divorce is goin' through this very minute, tho' it's none so easy,

'im 'avin' left 'er or she 'im, an' livin' with another. Decent chap, too, by all accounts."

"Pore kid," said she. "Wish you may get it soon. There's a tidy few as wants 'em nowadays, but the half of 'em don't bother. Arrange it between 'em; 'im an' 'er; and 'er an' 'im; keep your name an' no money spent; or just swops. Funny, ain't it? I don't hold with it meself, havin' been brought up different, nor ever did, nor will."

"We none of us ain't had much bringin' up," said he. "Leastways, it ain't schooling as teaches us them things, aye or nay. It's conscience as does it, an' some 'ave one an' some you'd reckon 'aven't. And yet, again, there's plenty as *'as* consciences what does it, and sorry enough they are when they wakes up to it."

After this we went back to the Fair. As we passed the Gondolas (which were playing Grieg's *Death of Ase*, arranged as a waltz), I observed the Corporal standing on the little platform under the electric orchestra. Cymbals palpitated around him, drums rattled to invisible sticks; angels, negresses, harlequins, and gondoliers, all heavily gilded, jerked their arms and necks mechanically around the central portrait of Edward VII. and Queen Alexandra, above whom clusters of electric lights already had begun to blaze. But the sunset flashed back from myriads of little mirrors, flaring fiercely as the vast machine gathered pace, roared as it rotated, and then jerked hideously backwards to the accompaniment of shrieks. The Corporal, very horsey, glistening gaiters, immense pale check riding-breeches, waisted coat with flaps, stock, and a bowler hat at an angle, had put the differentiating touch to his costume by means of a crimson sash He was shouting rather brutally at the crowd, timid, it would seem, of the "Glance," and ridiculing their reluctance. He didn't see us, and we turned back a step or two to see Lieutenant Smith's Amusements, which turned out to be twisted mirrors, and a few wax heads, representing Miss Flossie Foljambe, the Morphia Maniac, and some obscure murderesses; there was, too, a peep-show into which Tom Carter couldn't raise himself to peer. "Childish," he'd have called it.

We then decided to finish up with the Oriental Orgy. The tent was stifling, and we had to wait. Two elderly ladies, of a type which the Fair showed frequently, noticed me, and at once began they too, to put the Differentiating Touch. . . . "Of course, I don't really *go* to these places, dear," said the elder; "but then one always learns *something*, and on a day like this I thought one really

ought to!" "Oh, *yes*, dear;" she replied, "because . . ." But both remained silent, at a loss to find a motive for this duty.

"Jest to see how the pore dear common folks amuses of themselves," said Carter, so unexpectedly that I jumped. But a curtain drew aside, and there was the Oriental Orgy, sitting on a sort of tripod wreathed in snakes, of which the smaller ones were undoubtedly alive.

"I am the only genuine Oriental Orgy, ladies and gentlemen," she announced, in a mincing voice, most unsuited to her stalwart proportions. "This snake is, as you see, a cobra, and is the identical species used by the magicians when confronting Moses, and as worn by the Royal 'Ouse of the ancient Egyptians. It was also used by Cleopatra when angered by her defeat by Julius Cæsar, as told by Shakespeare. . . ."

But I was distracted by the two ladies' alarm, which was genuine, and caused one of them to grip me by the collar and then to apologize, and by their fictitious disapproval of the Orgy's attire. At least it didn't prevent their stopping there. But, more than all else, the sudden apparition of the Corporal amazed me; he stood on the further side of the tent, watching the Orgy with a scowl. She had descended from her perch, and was languorously dancing to the thudding of a drum and the clamour of *Indian Love Lyrics* from a gramophone; incense curled, but when I looked round, after a blaze of pink fire had made me blink, the Corporal was gone. A series of tableaux followed, in which the Orgy reclined on cushions, backed by a painting, first of the Pyramids, then of the Taj-Mahal, and finally, New York as seen from a roof garden. Such, I could only suppose, was the track of her career of guilty splendour. Finally, with a view of minarets and domes to inspire her, a sort of Omar, who'd decided by now that any wilderness would be happier without her, stood behind her with a scimitar. The light changed to green, and she was seen lying, with plenty of blood about, while a sort of giant bat flapped gauzy wings above her. It was quite horrid enough, and the two ladies went away more self-satisfied than ever. Such never should be *their* history. . . .

Outside, I met a large South African sailor of my acquaintance, and we all went home to supper, as it was quite half-past six. They ate cold mutton, cucumber, tomatoes, cress, bread and cheese, and drank tea; and behaved with a petrifying politeness. It was the dining-room which overawed them, and the superfluity of cutlery, and the foolishly small cups. However, they ate with appetite.

At 7.30 we sallied forth once more, and the South African took

charge of the carriage. Our progress waxed tumultuous. He whistled like a steam engine, and the carriage became a tank which hurled the crowd right and left, relentlessly. In fact, all my time was henceforward occupied in steadying the situation. A long column formed itself behind us, of persons who found that thus at last they could move with sufficient speed through the packed throng. Truculent small boys accompanied us, yelling; hundreds of people must have been bruised black and blue by our impact—for it was a rule of the Fair that you should advance with a crab-like motion, sidling along and looking anywhere save before you. But still, tempers were perfect, even when white shoes and stockings were blackened by our wheels; everyone tickled Carter with their whisks; he retaliated; powder flew about; Providence arranged that none fell on myself. The truculence of small boys; the insolence of fourteen-year-olds; the elegance of youths; the seething hordes of girls; the impermeability of middle age, all were alike defeated by the South African. Admirably he adapted himself to each category; the truculent infants adored his bluff, obliterative methods; the rowdies became green with fright when he turned on them with snarl and snap and roar; he took the elegants into his confidence; he leered the girls into squealing ecstasy; his Sirs and Ma'ams endeared him to pyramidical respectability. Throughout, his tact, his temper, his care for Carter, his thoughtfulness for me, were exquisite; and towards half-past nine I despatched him to finish the day on his own. With a wild whoop he disappeared.

Suddenly, too, disappeared the violent glare; silenced, the angry uproar of the music, the hoarse braying of the throng, as we turned into a side-street of old Wilchurch, on our way home. For a while the cathedral towers stood up, black this side, red that, a dusky sinister red, where the Fair shone against them. But them we passed; and between old gabled houses, with only here and there a yellow square or red of lamp-light in their blackness, we went down to the East Bridge. You could just hear the swirl of the water between the arches; the river poured forward from a tunnel of trees, and on between wide meadows where faint mist lay. An enormous sky spread over us, moonless, but full of stars.

Afterwards the road, too, passed beneath trees, and in the darkness he asked me if I'd enjoyed myself. I judged by his voice that I'd not spoil his day for him if I answered, " So so."

" Thought as much," said he. " You'll be a bit tired, anyway. But you'll soon be seeing your friend."

" Well," I said, " the thought of him isn't adding to my enjoyment at this moment."

" No ?" he asked. " Reckoned you was worrying about what we was saying durin' tea."

" It depressed me," I said.

" I'm glad you knows about me an' my trouble," he said, in a humble sort of voice. He was feeling himself not much of a man in the world, just then; a broken man, with a wife who'd reckoned him not worth her loyalty. " No one else in the hospital knows on it," he said. " Ethel Bennett, she had to be told, seein' she'll be writin' to Hanton about meetin' me. Queer, ain't it, runnin' up against her ?"

" Well, Tom, if you like to count me a friend, do. We've scarcely met except to-day; but I expect you feel a bit lonely in hospital at times, and it's pleasant to have something reliable."

" Lonely !" he said. " Reliable. . . ."

There was a long silence.

" Reckon there'd be nothing wrong in me marryin' Ethel Bennett when I'm well, if she'll have me ?" he said suddenly.

I felt very desperate. I didn't know how to start.

" Listen," I said, at last. " It'll be a long time before you're well enough to think of marrying Ethel, or anyone else. However much you occupy yourself with dreams of doing so, and of a home and a future, you'll be bound to go through hours of pain and despondency when you'll be the *worse* for your dreams. Couldn't you occupy yourself entirely with *doing* good turns right now, *giving* a good time to the lads as far as you can manage it, and leave the future to take care of itself ? Perhaps one never gets much out of life except chances of serving."

" I bin selfish during the war," he said. " I thought of nothing save the good time I'd have in me home when I returned. I was seein' meself all the while, comfortable, and in me little nest; an' now look at me."

" Tom," said I, " I'll risk saying it wasn't all selfish. You didn't just expect that your wife would live as she should, and keep things warm for you, and, meanwhile, do just as you pleased yourself ?"

" Never once," said he, trying to look round. " I ain't bin no saint; but never once since me marriage. Always turned me thoughts away to me 'ome and me wife an' kiddies. And now look !"

" Never regret it ! Never slack off *in your mind*. You had a

splendid principle there. You believed in your obligation. And also that God was approving of it, Tom . . .?"

"How shouldn't He? Reckon God prefers 'em straight. But I don't suppose 'E'd mind, or, anyways, Christ wouldn't, if I married Ethel Bennett."

"Well, wish to do only what They'd approve."

"I wish I was a kiddie again," said he. "Very happy 'twas. Queer, life; ain't it?"

But the indescribably solemn space of starlit night was over, and the fragrance and the silence.

The long lines of hospital lights twinkled in the distance, and in a few minutes we had turned down the asphalt path and entered the long, pale corridor. Carter's excitement bubbled up, now, within him; the carriage advanced into the ward, he all powdery, waving his whisk, and exclaiming that he'd had the time of his life. Kindly eyes twinkled at him from all round the room, flooded with the hard electric light; cheers and chaff greeted him; one or two other men had gone down; all had had their fortunes told; all took them with utmost seriousness, somewhat disturbed to find that the flattering "You can be Led, but not Driven" had been said to each, and to each that he was "passionately fond of music." To all had been promised health and wealth. All, once more, were flattered to find that they were Rather Wild, but Loyal to their Friends. . . .

I left them discussing it, ran for my 'bus, and rattled down to Wilchurch.

The Corporal was standing in the door of his van, behind the roundabout. He was once more in breeches and shirt, and didn't remove his pipe, nor smile, when he saw me. He just nodded.

"Tired?" said I, climbing the little ladder.

But I was amazed at the interior of the van. It was small, of course, and even so comprised two cabins, so to say, at each end, leaving a tiny square room in the middle. But the furniture of it! The sheer luxury! Let alone the miniature range, the dresser, and the lockers—the sheer ornamentation! Lamp brackets, with dangling glass pendants, projected on each side of a dummy mantelpiece; silver cups—won Heaven knows by whom, possibly by the Corporal himself, in the days of army sports; possibly, I was ready to surmise, by the Gondolas or even the van. A gramophone; a canary; sheaves of calico flowers, looking-glasses everywhere, everywhere, everywhere photographs—the Corporal, Kitchener, the King;

Carpentier, lots of ladies, and, disconcerting touch ! myself, black and cassocked.

" Frank," I cried, " what a magpie you are ! I thought you'd given up all this sort of thing since you came out of hospital."

" 'Ave to feel homey, ain't I ?" said he, gruffly, and dropped the subject. I'd thought he'd have been pleased, and I felt snubbed.

A man covered with black oil and an even grimier boy were sitting at a table on which mysterious dishes, chiefly of tinned food, reposed among stout-bottles.

Frank introduced me as the reverend gent wot done the kindly to him in 'ospital, and they extended friendly hands. They were Frank's satellites, and worked the roundabout.

" Mr. Newnes says as 'ow you wouldn't be above sharin' a bit o' somethin'," said the man. " But I warns you it ain't gentlemen's food."

" He eats," said Frank, grimly, " hanythink."

" What I want is a drink," said I. " I'm done in after that spinal carriage and I can't eat much, Frank; but I'm sure you can make some tea ?"

" Huh !" said he. " Wot's comin' to you ? Tea ? Time was . . ."

" Possibly," said I, " but, Mr. Beeton, don't you agree that there's nothing so quenching to a thirst as tea when you're hot and tired ?"

" There's them as will 'ave it so," he answered, glumly, and instantly shoved the boy very hard with his elbow. For that youth had suddenly grinned very wide, and ejaculated:

" 'Ow should *'e* know ?"

On being shoved, he said, " 'Ere !" but nothing else whatsoever the entire evening.

However, I afterwards devoured two sausages and drank about eight cups of tea.

" Done good business ?" I asked.

" Reckon this Fair ain't wot it was. Comes here reg'lar, don't it ?" he asked.

" Nobody knows how many hundreds of years. Before even I was born, Frank." For I was feeling millions of years old, just then, and everything seemed to have been happening over and over again in exactly the same way, and as though it always would. I tried to tell myself this was just fatigue, but the impression came from within the little room. . . .

" But this old town ain't that old ? This street ain't, anyways."

"No. But the tower of the church at this end is 900 years old, and that's not bad; and there was a church where the one at the other end is now, ages before *that* one was built, and *it* dates from the Middle Ages. All between was a field till a hundred years since, and that's where the fairs settled."

"Queer to think on," said he, rather depressed.

"And for hundreds of years at least, much the same amusements—roundabouts, anyway; pulled round by a couple of cart horses; before steam, you know. And a fiddle for the music. And swings, and coker-nut shies, and rifle ranges—you potted at Napoleon or—well, whoever was the villain of the moment; and lots of fighting-booths; and, of course, dancing. . . . My dear Frank, we're terribly respectable, nowadays! Shut down at 10—no dancing, no fighting, and no singing worth alluding to. . . . And yet, a bit nastier, some of it."

Frank, you will have gathered, had an imagination.

"A hundred years," said he, "an' swings an' roundabouts same as to-day. . . . Ain't that remarkable. Up an' down, an' round an' round. Round *and* round. Never no forrarder. Wot else is life? Wot else is ruddy life? nor yet the world. An' arsk a man to set 'imself agin that an' wish to alter things? Not 'arf. Not me. Not Mr. Francis Newnes. Round *an'* round."

"When 'e gits like that," said Mr. Beeton, "we 'ops it. Hp!" ejaculated he, seizing the grinning Alfred by the ear.

But exactly at that moment the door half opened and a female voice shouted, "Come on, kid!"

The Corporal turned with a roar that sent my heart jumping.

"Stuff yer stocking down yer throat," he shouted, "an' finish yer noise!"

"Comin', missus," said Mr. Beeton, hurriedly, and looking across at me. "Me an' Alf is comin', comin' quick."

At that the door opened completely, and a vigorous lady, whom I at once recognized as the Oriental Orgy, stood silhouetted in vivid white and yellow in the black doorway. She looked first, with a certain surprise, at the lumbering Mr. Beeton, and then turned, I judged, to make some observations to the Corporal. On seeing me, she paused; and then smiled down at me contemptuously from the height of her superb and florid health.

"'Ullo," said she, to Frank. "Got a friend, 'ave you?"

She compared me rapidly with the photograph, absorbed the situation and then said:

" Good-night, Mr. Newnes. Keep good."

And she disappeared.

The Corporal was scarlet with rage, and remained with his mouth open, at a loss for words.

" Good-night all," said Mr. Beeton, and tumbled out of the van.

" Wasn't that the lady," I said, " who performs next door? I shouldn't like that job. I hate snakes."

He found his tongue.

" Performs ?" said he. " An' a blame fool I was when I took on this 'ere performance, makin' a damn show o' meself hollerin' on the roundabouts and 'er and 'er lousy snakes thrown in along with it by old Smarle, that's 'er father, wot owns the lot an' dragged me into it when I couldn't rightly 'elp meself, 'avin' no job at the time an' reckoning to do well on the roundabout. 'Ow could I 'elp meself ? 'Ad to live; leastways I don't see why, but live one some-'ow does an' will do, a revolver bein' a fool's way out, I reckon; yes, I never arsk to live nor yet to be born, but take the sneak's way out of it, that I never will. An' bound 'and an' foot, I am, by the agree-ment, an' 'e knows it, an' that's wot I say, round *an'* round, an' once you're on, if the darn thing don't stop, no more do *you* not stop, unless you chuck yerself off." He pulled himself together a little and indicated the disposition of the van. " That's where I sleeps," said he, pointing with his thumb at the fore cabin, but staring at the floor. " An' old Beeton an' the lad they doubles up in 'tother; an as for Nellie Smarle, she 'as her tent an' van neighbourin', an' comin in 'ere at this hour o' night to git me to go an' clean up for 'er an' prepare the lightin' for to-morrow, it's the limit. If it wasn't for old Beeton an' young Alf, that's wot I'd be doin'; slavin' for Mistress Nellie. Round *an'* round. Can't get off it."

" Well, old son," said I, " all the more reason for your turning in now. I must, too. See you to-morrow. Good-night. . . ."

He looked at me, paused, and then said good-night and sat down again, staring at the table.

I climbed down the ladder, turned, and very nearly tripped over Beeton and Alf, who were sitting smoking on the end of the van.

" Finished already ?" said I. They looked at one another and then mumbled something. We said good-night, and I advanced into the open space down the middle of the Fair. I hadn't gone twenty yards before I heard his hurried steps.

" I've bin lyin' to you," he said, taking me hard by the elbow.

" I know, kid," said I, disengaging myself and putting my arm through his.

" It ain't no good," he said, and sighed.

" What isn't ?"

" Lyin' to you."

But we were now opposite our house.

" You'd better come in for a minute," I said. " We can't talk here."

He came, docile, unable to think much, and doing as he was told.

I stood him with his back to the mantelpiece and then placed myself in front of him with my hands on his shoulders. He kept his head a little sideways, eyes on the ground.

" It wasn't really a lie. You didn't expect me not to understand you, and you didn't want me not to."

" Now I'll *swear* that's the truth," he said, looking up and staring at me; but his eyes were bloodshot. " When I hear we're comin' to Wilchurch, I says to meself, ' Now Gawd 'elp us, for I can't but meet 'im. Meet 'im for sure I must, seein' as it's a cert 'e'll bring 'ospital cases to the Fair.' Meet you I must, an' wot'll I say to you ? Even if you notices nothink, I'm not goin' to *act* no lie to you, let alone tell you none. An' I says deliberate, ' Tell 'im straight out I will, an' not shirk it. 'E's got 'is religion, an' it ain't mine; an' I've got my opinions, an' they ain't 'is, an' livin' accordin' to 'em I am, an' will; an' tell 'im straight out I will, honest; an' why not ? That's my philosophy of nature, that is. I'm livin' natural, I am, an' let 'im 'ave it straight I will.' "

" Well, why didn't you ?"

" Couldn't. Fair couldn't. Why ? Dunno."

" I'll tell you. Because you didn't believe your own philosophy, old philosopher ! It's *not* your opinion that it's all all right."

" It *is* my opinion," he said, jaw set.

" Is it ? Was it, even when I saw you in London ? Was it the evening we all went out on the river—Hallinan, and Sergeant, and you and I ?"

" Now you're torturin' me," he said.

" You said you'd bruise no more souls . . . you're bruising hers —yes you are—and your own."

The veins of his forehead swelled thick; his lips quivered like a child's.

I sat down on my bed and pulled him down in front of me. He

put his elbows on my knees and his head down between his clenched fists.

" Cry, old boy," I said.

He was silent. I adored God in his heart, and waited.

Suddenly he said, " Can't," and was silent again.

Then he looked up.

" Mind you," he said, " it's *you*. It's you every time that I minds about. It ain't God. Don't you go thinkin' it. It ain't God. Nor yet it ain't Christ. Don't you think it. I knew it'd make you desp'rate; but I thought I'd bluff it out, an' I'd kid meself into thinkin' you'd take it sportin', sayin' as it were my instinct an' not 'avin' no religion, well, why *not* ? But it's no go."

He sprang up, furious.

" Good enough," he said. " I'm through with you. Fini ! I don't want no more o' you. You've been a gentleman to me, but we'll never think the same, an' I'll never do different. I knows meself. Let me out. I want to go 'ome. Better never see you no more. You're failed with me. You make me mad. I'll make me own life, damn it."

We went downstairs.

I felt it might be the last chance. Two minutes—but who could tell ? I said:

" You must let me walk back to the van with you, Frank."

" Please yerself," said he, airily.

He sighed in a shuddering short of way once, but didn't speak again.

At the tent I said good-night, and held out my hand.

" Night-night," said he, but didn't take it.

It was just one o'clock. From the two churches at either end of the Fair, ancient bells tolled; and from all over the old town, solemn music echoed. The vans and the roundabouts stood bleached in the starlight, which was keen. They all looked dead. They might have been the Fair of centuries ago. Life repeated itself, and Death, an endless duel; and time tolled itself out.

Chapter XV

NEXT day, for all I know, I played the coward. But I felt that it was impossible for me to go near the Corporal again for a while. I felt I might drive him desperate and make the separation permanent, for just now he hated me. So I went round directly after lunch to the Sergeant, and told him, in outline, what had happened. I suggested he might try going to the Gondolas himself and getting into conversation, and then come round to me.

He came, in fact, as early as three o'clock, which I took to be a bad omen, and when I saw his worried face I knew that things hadn't gone well.

"What happened?" I asked.

He shook his head.

"No go," said he.

"What did you do?"

"I went to his merry-go-round," he said, "and the moment I saw him I knew there'd be nothing doing. He wasn't drunk, I think, but he'd certainly been drinking, Father, and his face was fixed-like. And he wasn't doing business. Don't know why. Perhaps that sort of jerk in the machinery was too much for 'em; they'd stand there and look on and scream when the boats went jerking back, you know, but then they'd go along and try the ordinary ones. But somehow I think it was more than that. More like the way he shouted at them. Real angry, he was. Shouting in an insulting kind of way, and, of course, they don't like that. *Wouldn't* try it. Well, I went and stood immediately beneath him, and I'm dead certain he saw me, because he stiffened up, sort of; his face went all stiff and he broke off yelling for a moment; but he didn't let on, but started yelling again. Then I profited by his stopping to take breath, and 'Hullo, Corp!' I cried. But he wouldn't take any notice. Then I shout out, 'Hullo, Corporal Newnes! How goes it?' He *had* to notice that, and he cries out, 'Alludin' to me, Captain? Some mistake. I ain't no Corporal.' 'No, but you was,' I said, 'don't you remember Ward B III. in the

old hospital ?' ' Stow it,' he says. ' I never ain't bin in no 'ospital; so get on in the Gondolas an' pay your threepence and let me get along with me job. Out o' the gangway !' And with that he starts shouting again. So I saw it was no go."

" Well, that sounds pretty hopeless," I said.

" Cheer up, Father," said this excellent man. " If I were you I'd go round to Miss Barbara and let her have a try."

" But I can't send her alone into that Fair," I said, " and neither you nor I can go with her, because he'd see us and it would be spoilt. Besides, I really *couldn't* ask her to—well, to risk being insulted."

" I reckon she'd be real unhappy, *and* hurt," said he, " if you didn't give her the chance."

" Well, I'll go round," I said. " There may be a solution. Meanwhile, do be saying some Hail Mary's."

I went, and the Hail Mary's produced the solution in the shape of Cecil Calthrop, who was motoring northwards to some shoot or other, and had broken his journey here for tea.

I explained the situation, and Barbara, of course, said she'd go; and I confided her to Cecil, telling him in his turn to come round and say how things had gone.

He came up at about six, very flushed.

" I say, I say, I *say !*" he began, at once. " That's a nasty job. My dear old dear, is that the sort of thing you bring Barbara up against several times a week ? Gee, that girl's some girl; she's *it*, and *then* some ! She came along with me thinking how you men had muddled it all, and how *her* sweet girlish smile'd hit him where he feels he wants to cry, and reckoning she'd collar the goods and give you a percentage of the rake-off. *And* keeping a strangle-hold on her rosary, though thinking I didn't *get* that. But I did. I'm the all-round eye, *I* am. And when we got to the Gondolas, I ask you ! ' Keep out of sight,' she says to me. ' I'm the bright peculiar star *this* turn. Spot-light on me, every time and all the time. You fade out,' or words to that effect. Point was, if she failed, I've got to go round later and try *my* hand. If he sees me with her, I *can't* go again, get me ? And she goes on to the steps and she smiles fit to split the Pyramids, and your little friend, he stops in the middle of his super-yell as if he'd been shot, and he turned purple, and then—gee ! Some will-power, that lad's got. Pulled himself together, and when she holds out her hand, still smiling, he *wouldn't* see it, but looks above her head and yells *at* her; and damn it, I could have killed him," said he, suddenly

dropping his pose of the moment. "Called out to her to know if she was lonely and he'd take her round himself; called himself by his full name *and* title," said Cecil, reviving; "Corporal Francis Newnes, the gay lad, the meaty boy with the girls, damn him," said he relapsing suddenly again, "and stopped the whole show for her to climb into a gondola, and got in himself. 'An' we'll 'ave the blinds down,' he said. Of course she couldn't stand it. Even the crowd growled a bit, and told him to shut his nasty mouth. She ran down the steps like a hare, and I took her home right then. But oh! that girl's pluck! Didn't speak, but walked with her head high, not *angry*, I mean not sick because he'd insulted her like that, for she knew he knew her; but because she wasn't going to make a scene in the crowd. But just as she got to the house, she began to cry. And she ran round through the garden with her handkerchief up. And I knew better than to follow. My dearest dear padre, but what a job!"

"He's mad," I said. "Why on earth did I risk her going?"

"She'd have *hated* it if you hadn't asked her. D'you think that girl minds because of—of *that*? It's him she's thinking of. *She* knows he's got hell's own torments inside of him, before he'd act like *that*."

"I can't possibly suggest your going there again."

"Suggest, my venerable sir? I should hope not. It'd be up to you to *order* if I required first aid from you at all. I'm going round at eight, when it's tuned up properly. Yes, *sir*. And come round here after my own modest efforts. Me not go? I'll go, you bet, and go for it good!"

"If you insist," I said, "go and look in at the Oriental Orgy, too, and tell me what you think."

"You reprobate!" he cried. "That's the bright idea. Who said you'd lost 'em?"

"Lost what?"

"Brains," said he; "grey-matter: thinking-spark. I'll go and captivate the Orgy, and he'll get jealous and breathe her the last good-bye."

"Ah, don't fool," I said. "It doesn't admit of it. Come back when you've tried what's possible."

"Say a prayer for me between now and then," said he, looking at me with profound eyes. "I'm the mere machinery in *this* stunt."

Towards eleven he came back, certainly in a wild state of excite-

ment, and looking extraordinarily dissipated. I don't know how he managed it, because he wore immaculate evening dress; an opera hat and a monocle were the only unexpected additions. But he did look most amazingly raffish.

"I may as well say at once," said he, huddling himself into an armchair, "that it's no good. None."

Then he said, giving rein to his excitement, after that moment's control:

"I went to the Orgy first. Pretty fatuous; but a bit of extra about it, somehow. Couldn't quite make out what, till your little pal came in and Gorgons weren't in it with *his* bright, kindly eyes. Talking of eyes, she'd been making goo-goo eyes at me, till then. Stuck myself right in the front, I did; couldn't but see me; and I put on the stage-box yearn, and up to it, she was, in a flash. And suddenly, she went rigid. Eyes glued to a mystery spot behind me. Worked myself round gradually. There he was, by the side; and no more pretty-gentleman touch for *me*. I tell you, that woman's a study! Rotten all through, that's clear; and got him under her thumb, sure thing; but if *so*, he's got her under both thumbs *and* all his fingers *and* his boots, if you ask me. Loves him, she does, but goes in terror of her life all day and night. Oo! Cold shudders. Out I got, moment the show switched off. Then I drooped off to the Gondolas."

"Well?"

"Bit more crowded to-night. Packed, in fact. Crowd rougher, and relished his talk. I say, my sainted papa, but you've got a rotten set of girls in this old village. Brrr! And the lads just suit 'em. However, I wriggle in to the steps, and there I lean, hat well on back of my head, and looking more than a bit merry, and I laugh Har Har at his riskier bits, and at last he begins to take notice of me and shouts *at* me, a bit, and I laugh louder than ever, and then I start shouting, too. 'Dry work, professor, what?' I yell. 'America's a drippin' sop, to *me*, me lord,' he answers. 'An' the Sahara's a sea o' syrup to my throat.' '*I'll* take it on a bit, dear old scout,' I say, '*I'll* give 'em Juicy Joe, I will, trust me, and, meanwhile, you hop round to the Kiss-and-Run, and order yourself a quick one, and put it down to the *H*onourable Cecil Calthrop of Park Lane, West *One*.' Yes —I play that tiny card when needed! And before he can stop me I jump up beside him and give him a shove in the solar-plexus, and before he has time to say 'damn,' I start haranguing the proletariat, and gee! I get 'em every time. Crude, my eloquence, I

confess. Azure-blue my metaphors; search me, if I know where I got it all from! You're a bit too young, papa, to have me repeat it. But roll up? the Atlantic's a skating-rink to the billows of *that* mob; *I* worked those Gondolas for a solid hour and a quarter, and when the Fair shut down I fell fainting into the arms of Mr. Francis Newnes, and he supported me to the shelter of his happy little van and gave me sal-volatile."

"Well, you're a genius, Cecil; but I simply can't laugh to-night."

"I know, my dear old dear," he said, and I began to wish his excitement would die down. "Don't tire yourself trying. Well, when I revived, we sat down to steak and kidney pie, and gad! I needed it. And I was heading well to harbour, for he was taken with me, Mr. Newnes was, and he was giving me the list of all the places the Fair was to travel to, and I was meaning to re-arrange my autumn engagements in view of following him round a little, and receiving him in my arms when he gets his knock-out, which I reckoned he was sure of pretty soon, because *that* loving couple won't last long. And plonk! the castle crashes, for the door opens, and in comes the Orgy herself. Some Orgy, with the paint off, or half off! Brrr! Don't ask *me* to tell you. And he roars at her, oh, horrid! After all, she's a woman, or was. And a fine one, too, by some standards, I'd say. But he tells her to git, and she says, meek, but angry, can't she come in and sit down a bit and have a sup of something, and he drives her out, and I tell you that old machinery-man of his looked properly ashamed of the whole proceeding, and even the boy showed his teeth. You never saw such a change in Mr. Newnes! Quite affable, though too damned familiar a minute before; but now—whew! Face red, eyes red, cheeks all swollen, veins right out on his forehead! *Mon Dieu*, how he hates her. And when she's gone, he sweeps the plates off the table—crash! And he turns on me and tells me to take myself off. Says he saw me at the Orgy show. Says I'm after his woman. Says he knows my sort. Takes a handful of coins and chucks 'em at me. Says he wouldn't have my earnings in his pockets not if they were millions. Well, I try to argue a bit, and pacify him; no good; tells me he'll chuck me out if I don't go. And what could I do, with his game leg and he as drunk as a lord; that's what he was by then. Reckon the liquor bit suddenly. I'd have boxed him easily, sober, and with both legs working, but as it was——" he shrugged his shoulders. "Out I slunk, and here I am. Failed, Father, I'm afraid. If I'd had more grace in me, I'd have won. As it is . . ." He shrugged

his shoulders again, and all his excitement was gone so completely that you couldn't have imagined it ever had existed.

"Well," I said, "then we'll just leave it all to God."

"I wish we'd left it there a bit more from the outset," he said. "I expect I trusted to my method. Thought I'd be bound to get home on it. My God! D'you think I've mucked the whole business? But I had to get into contact, somehow. But mark you! I was enjoying it. I was selfish. I always am. I'm the most selfish little beast in England. Oh, but I wanted to say, I didn't overstep the line when I was fooling around that Orgy, you know. She did all the eye-play."

"Of course. Don't be ridiculous."

"Yes. But I wanted you to be sure that there was no positive taint that I could have helped, that interfered with God's grace."

"Cecil, the awful puzzle is this. It's really *I* who've driven him desperate. Suppose I'd said from the outset that it all didn't matter much; after all, he's got entangled, but he'll shake loose again; and nearly all the world would think me every kind of a fool for making a fuss about so ordinary a thing as him and her—well, suppose I'd just been easy-going—and, well, he's *not* a Catholic, he hasn't the Catholic conscience—all these scenes wouldn't have happened. Poor old Sergeant Raikes wouldn't have got that public snub—and he's got his pride, you know, and feelings—he *liked* the Corporal up to a point; and, of course, he's upset because he thinks *I* am; and as for Barbara! I go hot and cold when I reflect on that incident. And now you."

"My dear Father," he said, looking at me quickly, and then turning away again. "Excuse me, but you're wrong there. He'd have been heart-broken if you'd been easy-going. The Christian ideal is the one beautiful and noble thing in life for him; and if you'd demolished it—well, he'd have lost all belief in anything and everyone, *and* in you; and you'd never have been able to help him again, ever. Yes, heart-broken he'd have been. He loves you; and to see you climb down would have been the end of the world for him. You're the only person who in any way is offering to him what he's sickening for."

"But what are we to *do*?"

"Not despair, anyway. You might have, if he'd been cheery with the Sergeant and polite to Barbara, and unchanged to you. Though even then you needn't have. God gets the better even of the cynic; even of the corrupt."

He remained looking steadily before him, his clean-cut profile really beautiful, just then. The two little vertical lines graven close either side of his mouth were deeper, just now. I'm quite sure they positively, as a rule, annoyed him. He always protested they were due to dissipated living; really, they meant an almost terrible self-schooling.

"*Will* He get the better of him?" I asked.

"How can I tell?" he muttered. "I'm a kid. I'm a clumsy inexperienced hobbledehoy. I've only just left school. . . . But I *will* tell you what's happened hitherto, and I bet I'm right. I bet she saw him somewhere when he was down and out, after his shop went bust. And I bet she went crazy on him; that sort of woman does, especially when she's getting middle-aged. And as for her, she'd be middle-aged quite young. Well, that wiry, hungry, knowing type's what'd get her. She'd go crazy. And she'd rope him into her show, and sooner than starve, he'd come; and—well, after that spell of self-repression you told me about—trading on his own will-power, and with no motive except to defy you—prove you wrong in what you'd be bound to think of him—he'd experience some sort of spell himself, at least, as long as her first mad adoration lasted; and each of 'em would be boss in their own way; only, when he began to realize how thoroughly she was *financial* boss, and when she began to play the tyrant, the spell would wane; he can't get away, and he's furious at having to stay; he still loves a little, but he hates *more*; and, my God, if he doesn't break away soon, I wouldn't answer for her neck. But he believes; he's fighting a losing battle against Faith."

"He mentioned a Mr. Smarle who, I understood, was boss."

"Mr. 'Arris," said he, "there ain't no sich a person."

"My dear psychologist," I said, "please God you're right; and again, please God you mayn't be. *I* don't know! Anyhow, human methods aren't going to help us now at all, I think. We've reached the limit."

"They aren't?" he said, springing to his feet. "You really think so? Then that's great! Because we can go straight to God. How I envy people who always can! Look at Barbara."

"Does she?"

"She'll be able to, directly she's a Carmelite."

"What have you been talking about, you two?"

"We haven't been. But don't tell me you don't see it for yourself. She *can* use all the human little ways—Gad! can't she though!

—but she needn't. I don't believe she's being *asked* to. I believe her soul's meant to burn straight away into God, and then to come back and blaze in other souls. Let her go quick, padre. I want to have her praying for me in Carmel."

"I may as well tell you," said I, "that I think it'll be the Poor Clares. Don't speak about it. She's just mentioned it."

He looked graver still.

"Ah! The Poor Clares," he said. "If she can be that . . ."

Then he got up.

"I'd like to go to confession, Father, please. I wish I'd looked in and gone before starting on that job. Can't be too clean for that work. Give me a minute or two."

In reality he was always ready; but he knelt, for a while, behind me, and then the blood of Christ stole through the intricate recesses of his soul.

Then he said, "I suppose I can come to Mass here to-morrow? I'd better be off now. I billeted myself at the Travers' and the Sergeant'll be sitting up to let me in. He has to be up early, and so'll I, if I have to come round here. Or wait, I'd better go with Barbara."

"I can go across directly I get up," I said, "and ask leave to say my Mass at the church. Eight. I'd like to give Communion to the two of you."

"Fine," he said. "Oh, and cheer up! I've got a couple of instructees for you, and p'raps three. One's a perfectly gorgeous book-maker; met him at an oyster bar at Ostend; keen as mustard. Then there's a budding diplomat; needs to be pulled together a bit; very gilded; rather an ass, but I think he'll come along. And the other cert is my mother's maid's young man. She's—well—she's rather—well, *you* know French maids. But once he's in, he'll straighten her up a bit. Blessing, please."

He dropped down on his knees again, and I gave him my blessing and asked his prayers.

Chapter XVI

IN October Mr. Travers caught influenza, and didn't seem likely to recover. Under the strain Barbara began to feel she wasn't being honest if she didn't clear up the situation, and she wrote to Reggie to tell him that should her father die she meant to be a nun. She told me this, and also that she was sure Reggie would realize she wanted it conveyed to Geoffrey Blake. To Geoffrey she couldn't write, of course; because, after all, he hadn't yet asked her definitely to marry him. In this way she displayed not only, I considered, a great faith in God, but a remarkable trust in the nobility of those two young men.

I heard first from Reggie.

"DEAR FATHER,

"You know what Barbara's written to me. I believe I half foresaw it, and you know I thought I'd not be able to bear it. Well, it's all right, thank God. It's curious, because I believe I love her as much as ever, but ever since I seriously resolved to carry on helping Blake, the idea doesn't hurt less, but I seem to be able to not mind being hurt. In fact, I feel happier inside than ever yet. I don't think it's just relief that the uncertainty's over, though that's something. But I have a sort of conviction it's all right. I feel very buoyed up—not excited; but I believe your Mass must have been helping me a lot. So much for me. Well, I felt quite sure Blake ought to have it conveyed to him, so I came over to Hanton and wangled a week-end, and I worked the talk round to saying I'd always half thought she meant to be a nun, and now she'd made it clear that when Mr. Travers died she'd do it. He didn't say anything then; later on he asked me if I thought it was depression at the idea of losing her father, and I said no, she'd never look at a Convent as an escape, but as a way of offering herself to God, and that she thought she had a vocation. He's seemed a bit dazed since, and he says he's coming over to see you; but I think he meant to convey to me that it wouldn't alter his resolution to become a Catholic, because

he carried on enquiring about details, and thanked me a lot for helping him. So I hope it's all right. I daresay it may make all the difference to him and me. Cheeriho.

"Ever yours,
"REGGIE."

"P.S.—I needn't say, go on remembering me at Mass. I feel very much at a loose end. I think you might invent a course of reading for me. I am awfully ignorant about Mass itself. Couldn't it be that?—R. You don't *know* how she occupied all my thoughts. It seems so futile working at one's job now."

Three days afterwards Geoffrey appeared.

We walked out to the hospital together, and all he said about the topic, on the way there, was that no doubt I knew the knock he'd had, and that we'd talk about it a bit later. He was very friendly in the wards; I only took him where there were really bad cases, but one or two men met him in the corridors who had already been to visit him at his office; he remembered them quite well, and he seemed to me glad to be able to meet them less conventionally. He no longer had any army mannerisms, and his voice struck me as singularly respectful. I wondered whether this was because, never having been wounded himself, he for the first time sympathized by experience with pain and despondency. But I exulted when he said quite simply, that since I said Mass up here from time to time, he'd value it no end if he could make his first Communion here. I said that Mass was very early, and he said, hesitating a little, that he'd like to be quiet when he was received, and if he might, he'd stay at an hotel in Wilchurch and come up A.M. on his motor-bike. I offered to put him up, and added that he could bring me up, in that case, in his side-car. Neither of us alluded, even remotely, to the idea of his not becoming a Catholic now.

On the way down he felt he could talk more easily.

"I want to say, first," he began, "that I consider Barbara's been absolutely first-rate. You know nothing was *due* to me. She needn't have sent Orwylstree—because I'm sure she did send him, though he was as tactful as possible; and she never need have thought of me at all. But what I mean is, she's been so honourable. She never tried to persuade me to be a Catholic; she never made the *least* suggestion she'd be any different if I did become one; and what strikes me as finest, she hasn't allowed *me* to interfere with

what she thinks is right, even though she might well suppose an average sort of man like me might chuck the whole business when I saw she wasn't going to have me. Well, I suppose I've got to give up thinking of her like—like that; but I shall always *respect* her more and more for going through with it. D'you know, I'd be half sorry, in a way, if she chucked the idea of being a nun, now."

"It hasn't been too—painful?"

"Well, d'you know, I'd never have believed it. I'd have thought I'd go mad if you'd suggested this even a couple of months ago. But—well, you know, when I wake up in the morning, I feel right away that something's happened, and it takes me a second or two to remember what exactly; and then I feel a sort of thump—don't laugh!—in my tummy; a sort of horrid jar; and on and off during the day I feel sort of bruised and sick all of a sudden; but, honestly, I don't feel miserable. I even feel half—well, rejoicing, sometimes . . . I daresay you understand this sort of thing, but I'm sure I don't."

"I think you've become thoroughly unselfish."

"Well, I jolly well ought to have. Don't think me rude, padre, but all your instructions, for which I'm jolly grateful, you know, and even the retreat, all that's *nothing* to Orwylstree. Absolute heroism. Couldn't have believed it possible. Well, that settled me. That made it clear as daylight that the Catholic religion's absolutely unlike everything else in the wide world. No one would do what he did for anything else that I can possibly think of. And in a way Barbara's done the same sort of thing. It must have cost her frightfully to think she might be risking my conversion. Jove! she's clinched it."

"Also, she showed she trusted you very completely. Next best to—to loving you, Geoffrey. You trust her, and she trusted you. It's a close and beautiful relationship."

"Jove!" he said. "I see *how* you can have this sort of serious happiness in the middle of, well—I'll own up—the devil of a lot of pain. I believe I've been so deucedly happy I hardly realized how it *was* hurting."

"What a thin sort of thing pleasure is, compared to happiness!"

"That's a queer way of putting it!" he said, and laughed.

"Well, isn't it true? How *dull* people are who exist for having a good time! I'm very seldom bored; but, honestly, I have to struggle not to be bored by them! How shallow! How selfish! And how unsuccessful!"

" If I live to be ninety, I shall never stop thanking God for letting me see what unselfishness means, in Orwylstree. You begin to believe the whole world's fighting for its own hand, and you suddenly see *that*. What's a general or a prime minister or a millionaire to *that?* Poor little nonentities !"

" God is initiating you," I said. " But don't ever be contemptuous. One could be any of those things *and* unselfish !"

" I know; but what I'd single out to go down on my knees before, would be the unselfishness. And you know, he never said a word about it. . . . I mean, never hinted it. . . . I'm so blind that I might never have guessed it if you hadn't pointed it out. I say—" cried he, struck by yet another idea—" what a life that fellow's leading *inside himself*—doesn't require to advertise—doesn't seem to need sympathy, even——"

" Oh, but he does ! He feels very very small and bewildered and lonely, I assure you. He's all right *right* inside; but he doesn't feel self-sufficient more than you or anyone else does. He requires friends, too."

" By Jove ! I hope I may be one of them."

" Be sure of that."

After a long pause, I said:

" Don't you think all this hunt for pleasure and excitement is a very rotten thing ?"

" Isn't it just after-war reaction ?"

" Is it ? Hasn't it gone on too long ? Doesn't it mean people just snatch at all they can get in the way of selfish satisfaction ? And isn't that a lack of principle, much deeper than a mere superficial irritability ? And by now they *know*. They *must* know the misery that exists, and the frightful poverty. . . . I'm afraid I feel a lot more strongly than I *think* on this subject. Yet I don't know ! Is it *just* that people should pay £1,000 for furs ? I saw that the other day. Or food. . . . I once had a dinner which made me ask myself quite seriously whether I'd not committed a sin in eating it. Ever so many courses, and each at almost ten shillings, and special odd things, not even very nice. . . . However, the lad asked me to come; he was on leave; he'd have chucked his money about whether or no. And I remember I shrove him before he went to bed, and he had communion next day—a very simple, honest lad. But, sincerely, until we learn austerity all over again, we shall go from bad to worse; revolution will be the least bad thing ! We shall lose our souls. . . ."

"I say, you know! But this is pretty awful! I'd looked forward to having quite a number of good dinners with you, on and off! Won't you come?"

"Sure! Very glad to. But this much I *will* stick to. Unless a man is putting a strong dose of unselfishness into his life *some*where it's a disgusting thing to see him *merely* out for a good time; it's disgusting, stupid, vile taste, and nowadays half criminal. So there! Meanwhile, *mon cher*, we shall buy some chestnuts off this fellow and we'll roast 'em for tea. You buy 'em, and say something amiable to him so that he'll feel warmer." For the October evening was closing damp and chill.

It was early yet for fires, but in honour of Blake's visit I had prepared one. He sat on the hearth-rug, roasting chestnuts, during his tea, and stayed down there after we'd cleared away—for I'd carried it to my room so that we need not break our talk in two unnecessarily. And it is so much easier to talk when you are roasting chestnuts or playing with a poker, anyhow. So there he sat, propped against my knee, growling hideous imprecations when he burnt his fingers, and as pleased as a boy when the shells came off the chestnuts properly. He was like a man who had been very badly wounded, but was so healthy in himself that the wound healed well and quickly. To drop simile: he was content; and not because he was selfish or shallow, as a lot of things made me realize, and not least what he said next—but because he was being vigorously helped within himself to reconstitute his life. I don't say that this inside help was his own goodwill alone; Reggie's human will was intertwined with his; Reggie's supernaturalized human will; and also the human and the divine will of our Lord, healer of all hearts.

After a longish silence, during which he made such a mess of the chestnuts that it was clear he was thinking hard, he said:

"There've been moments, mind you, only moments, when I've asked myself all the silly old stock questions. At least, I suppose everyone asks himself them."

"Like what?"

"Like, Why is there such a lot of suffering in the world?"

"What else?"

"It sounds vilely self-important—but after all I *am* myself—Why should I be put through all this? I don't quite like to say I haven't deserved it; because at the back of my mind I feel I may have; or even, it may be silly to talk of deserving or not deserving it, if it does one good. Like that woman and the baby and the dentist you told

us of; it would be silly of the kiddy to say, 'What have I done to *deserve* having my tooth out?'"

"But listen. That doesn't quite solve your difficulty—at least, not on a general scale. For the teeth came out, and I presume the spots went away! The poison came out of the system, anyhow. But what about the people who don't know how to use suffering? For it's no good unless you use it. Perhaps the suffering doesn't get the spiritual sickness out. It's not quite as automatic as teeth and spots."

"Yes," said he. "I'd not followed it up like that. What about the innocent people who suffer, and wouldn't resent it if they knew how to use it, but don't know how to, and can't? It wouldn't improve them, but spoil them. . . . By Jove!"

"Wasn't there one more question?"

He hesitated.

"There was and there wasn't. It occurred to me to ask, Why does God make a world where there's suffering at all? But I wouldn't quite let myself. If there's one thing that's clear it's that I'm incapable of judging God. I really have *not* got the cheek for that. I couldn't judge even my parents properly when I was a kid."

"Well, not *judge* exactly. But even a child, I think, often has a very accurate instinct of what's just or not, and resents unjust actions of parents. And even with God, it's possible to look at His actions in a limited sort of way, so that if what you see of them were all there was to *be* seen, they *would* be cruel or unjust."

"Well, but the fault's in my way of looking at them; that's easily grasped. Not in them. You showed me at the very beginning that God's infinite and perfect and can't be otherwise, and His action's right and must be. Whereas I'm bound to be limited in my view and probably wrong about anything that's even a good deal larger than I am."

"Yes: but as you said, you're *you*; and so abstract considerations like that mayn't serve much at a crisis, unless they've really permeated you and constructed the inside of your mind for you, and regulated the whole flow of your instinct. That takes long. Meanwhile, our Lord came and revealed what it would take the intelligence too long to see for itself."

"All the same I *have* asked myself if there could be a world without pain."

"What did you decide?"

"I thought of an odd thing. It doesn't really seem to apply.

But it's this. If there's a *lot* of things, can one avoid pain ? I don't mean men, but a lot of anything, if it's alive."

" You mean they're bound to fight ?"

" Well, I mean thing A needs, say, food. Thing B needs food too. Well, perhaps there's plenty of food for both somewhere, but not here. Well, whether they fight or no, one's got to go without and starve, or get only half of what it needs and be spoilt."

" Yes, yet the struggle for life is not *more* deep set than the associative, friendly instinct. The world and its contents do tend to group themselves—to associate. But even if that's true and works on a general scale, the individual may get a thin time of it. However, outside of man, I suppose living creatures have *only* instinct, and not ideas, so they don't know that they're suffering—in fact they aren't. They aren't exactly automatons; but they can't look backwards and forwards, as even old Homer said men could."

" That goes part of the way. But it still remains, why did God make a sort of world in which that could happen ?"

" D'you think that's really asking why He made a world at all ? If He did, it had to be limited, and made of limited things. All limited things are imperfect, in this sense that they haven't qualities and assets that others have. So they depend on one another, and the associative instinct is possible and even necessary, and *therefore* the converse of it—that is, fighting."

" Well," he said, " it's obviously silly to ask why God made a world at all. . . . And anyhow," he went on, " the problem really isn't due to things that suffer and don't know it, but to those that do, and don't know why, and can't cope with suffering, and that's *us*."

He began boring holes in the red coal with the poker.

" Think of this," I began. " There's not only a lot of us, and all of us imperfect; but we can't *be* perfect and 'rounded off' at any given minute, because we're involved in a *process* of which the end's nowhere yet in sight."

" Will it ever be in sight ?"

" Anyone can see it's not in sight in this world; Christians believe the end—I don't mean the mere finish, but the total thing, the living consummation—is in the next."

" Yet everyone feels they have a sort of right to happiness right *now*."

" So they have; to a *certain* happiness; and they'll get the full happiness if they don't murder their chances. But one most certainly will not get full happiness in one chapter only of life, which

this world's experiences are; still less, in one paragraph of this chapter. But you can get plenty of happiness, and even joy, if not always pleasure !"

" The reason I said ' right to happiness,' " he said, " was because I had a fearful argument with a girl I once took for a week-end to Maidenhead early on in the war. I suppose I began to feel lofty and moral when I got bored, which I did right away on Sunday morning. I began to see it was all wrong, and she said No, but that we had a right to happiness. I said this wasn't happiness, and it was hypocrisy to pretend it was; but that it was a second-rate enjoyment, and didn't even profess to supply either of us with *happiness*."

" She must have been very annoyed !"

" Oh, she said the world was a miserable place anyhow, and you'd better get what you could while you could, and then take an overdose of something and get out of it."

" Well, you could distinguish between pleasure and happiness yourself, even then."

" Jove, so I did !"

" Of course, if one cuts out the ' future ' life, the main part of life I prefer to say, or is vague about it, one is almost bound to grasp at the immediate pleasure, because it does seem to round life off for the time being, anyhow. Lots of people don't, because they have a measure of self-control based on some sort of better principle, even though not the best."

" What I see, of course, as clear as daylight, is that you don't *want* to use the better principles, half the time, even when you know 'em."

" In other words, nearly all the pain, and I think *all* the worst mental pain in the world, is in the long run due to misuse of will; in fact, to sin."

" If you could cut out certain sins," he said, " think of the mass of disease and the mental misery that goes with it you would cut out too."

" And money-grabbing," I said. " At the root of the war, was *injustice*. Trying to grab the whole for one's self, or as much as one can get. And at the root of slums, and sweated labour, and horrible childhoods, and drunkenness."

" That's the idea ! Trying to get too much, if not everything. I never expect to be a millionaire, and to be a sort of universal king. But I see I do feel an instinct to get all I can—anyhow what'll make me thoroughly comfortable. Pleasure, money, power. . . ."

" So it's up to someone," said I, " to preach poverty, chastity and obedience !"

For some of our most heated discussions had been about priests and religious cutting themselves off from life. Besides, I wanted him to see Barbara as not only doing what was right for her, but what could be very good in itself.

He perfectly well saw it.

" Now and again," he said, twisting his head up and grinning, " your conversation is not unpleasant; but I believe I like quite a number of things you *don't* say."

" After one more explosion of volubility," I replied, " I shall become a Trappist and never talk again. But now do just listen for one moment."

" You're very seldom volcanic," he said. " And don't become a Trappist."

" Well, now take the world as full of crowds of decent folks with honest, limited intelligences, and with honest good-wills. They fasten their conscious loves on to what they see. Old Aristotle said that perhaps we don't love really what we seem to, or even think we do, but *one* mysterious thing in the last resort. But anyhow, we *feel* attached to all sorts of excellent small things, and are apt to stop there. Now suppose God's educating such persons, not to mention the race. He's trying to make them see more and deeper. In the long run, if they yield to His educating, they'll love more, and more deeply; but at first, if their will is attached resolutely to all those lesser things, they'll feel it painful to be led away from them to anything larger and wider; and they may resist; they may get angry with each new increase of light, and even deny that it *is* light. Then they get into bad faith. Perhaps God may foresee that (as we say), and in mercy refrain from giving them extra light. But He may see they'll yield in the long run, and then He detaches their will from all sorts of limited things it was fastened down to, and that *hurts*. If a soul is strong enough, He may put it through a perfect martyrdom."

" That was a remarkable thing you said about everyone really being in love with *one* thing. . . ."

" Aristotle said it. But so did St. Paul, when he declared that God had made all men of on blood over all the earth, so that they grope after God, if haply they might find Him. They pause at all sorts of images of God—love of country, love of ideas, love of art, love of women, of home—well, I daresay even, you may say, they pause at caricatures—tyranny, lust, amusement . . . but always

that leaves them dissatisfied even if they don't know how to go on to what's better. Such people *end* heartsick and even suicidally miserable, unless they drug themselves and end just stupid. But I daresay average people end, in this life, with a love of a fairly good image of God, such as a happy and affectionate family, in which wife and husband and child, making a home, are a very wonderful image of the Holy Trinity and heaven, though still an image."

"But are we to end as image-worshippers, then?"

"No. And that's why all but accomplished Saints are to have their Purgatory! That is why Purgatory is pain, because it weans you from images which you'd come to think good enough, and to adhere to; and that's why it's happy, because it's making you capable of loving, and of being happy in, the One Real Thing."

"Jove! How it all fits together!"

"And even better when you go on to the supernatural world which our Lord has revealed to us. St. Paul speaks similarly, only with a still richer meaning, I daresay, when he says that all created things groan and travail together towards the revelation of the Sons of God! What a lot there is in that *towards!* And in that *together!* If one could only see human history as a combined, associated struggle—frightfully painful, because away from the limited, the transient, even the departmental *good* things towards the full revelation, the *something else* which we couldn't even have guessed at if we'd not been told it—that the maximum, the sum total, of human satisfaction that is naturally open to us, is less than what God means for us. Our perfection, naturally speaking, lies in the life and association and happiness proper to our being sons of men . . . but we are to be able to have a life, and a union, and a happiness which are supernatural and proper to what St. Paul can only call being *sons of God*."

"I have floating ideas in my head," he said, thoughtfully. He was still sitting on the floor, with his back, now, against my knees, and like the Corporal once in London, sought visions in the fire. "Can you piece them together?"

"What sort of ideas? Give me a hint!"

"The Crucifixion. The Resurrection. People who say Christianity's a kill-joy . . ."

"Well, so far, surely, it's proclaimed *increase* of life. And there's its obstinate paradox. Increase of life is the aim, and the method is always death. Christ said, 'I am the Resurrection and the Life,' and, He was crucified. He said, 'I am come that they might have

life, and have it more abundantly,' and *also*, ' If any man would come after Me, let him take up his cross daily and follow Me.' His cross ! Go to the gallows. Go right down. *Right* down. ' *My God*, why hast *Thou* forsaken Me ?' He hadn't; but it felt like that. Separation even from the *felt* love of God; from satisfaction in the joy of the love of God. Quite stripped, quite naked. But He can't *stop* there. He's killed, but He can't stay dead. *Mors et vita duello conflixere mirando. Dux vitæ mortuus, regnat vivus.* The whole of all history is summed up, do you see, in Christ. He bowed His head and died. ' *Consummatum est.*' What did He mean ? Just that the pain was over ? Of course not. But that the whole of the doctrine of sacrifice had been summed up, accomplished *fully*, in Himself. The perfect offering of life to that for which alone in the full sense it's intended, God. Offered utterly, to that to which alone you can offer anything utterly, God. And at once, a sort of sign by anticipation that death hasn't triumphed. From his pierced Heart, living blood and water spring; His Life shall go on cleansing and nourishing His Church—His mystical Body, *us*. And after a brief space, needed, I suppose, to leave us in no doubt about the reality of His death, He rises. Death has no dominion over Him. He leads captivity captive. Christianity moves by way of death, but never stops there; it passes all the day long through that gate into life."

" It's remarkable," he said, " how everyone agrees on giving crosses as marks of honour: V.C.'s, M.C.'s, the Legion of Honour. What a transformation ! Can you picture the gallows turning into *the* symbol of glory because some criminal had died on it nowadays ?"

" No. There'll only ever be one Christ. But He can transform even gallows ! For what a symbol ! See the Cross ! it's planted in earth, and it goes all the way down; and it's lifted above earth, right up to heaven. And it stretches its arms, this way and that, right round the world. Perhaps, until a man *has* gone right down, he'll not have it open to him to go right the way up. He must taste that despair, maybe, which is just *not* despair, for it holds the God it hides."

He meditated.

" And no wonder after that, that the essence of Catholic life is Mass. Communion. Method *and* aim. You join yourself to Christ. If you join yourself to Him, you join yourself to Him dying and dead, but by that very fact you can't help joining yourself to Him living, rising, and giving life."

" So it's true," he said, slowly, " that Christianity can't be comfortable. Well, we agreed to practically that early on, even before we mentioned Christianity, that you can't make much out of a life that's merely comfortable. And you can't out of a life that's selfish. It's got to be social. And anyone, God or not, who's doing you any good is bound, in a sense, to draw you away from yourself and join you on to other people; and that involves a lot of giving up and self-sacrifice. So one oughtn't to grouse when a sacrifice comes along, because *whatever it is*, one can turn it into *that* sort of sacrifice."

" The worst of it is," said I, " after the first pang, you find that the sacrifice has stopped being one, and you've got a lot more than you gave up. Then you go on to the next one !"

He frankly laughed.

" What on earth'll be *my* next one ?"

" Oh well, you needn't have a next one exactly ! You develop an attitude of will. A good will wanting always more union with God and dislike of what holds you back."

" *Then*," said he, " you romp right away into Communion. I see that. How jolly good Christ is, not only telling us so, but acting the whole in person. Gave up everything, and *is* everything. Got crucified, and, I suppose, needn't have. I suppose His love for God was so perfect and pure He could have loved God in our name and it would have been good enough, and stood for the whole world ?"

" He *could* have. But it wouldn't have been what we wanted, or what some of us want ! Could you do with a perfectly serene successful Christ ? I doubt it, old boy; you want a Friend; and a friend can't be a quite different sort of person from you. We need a Christ like and unlike us. I think some of us need a Christ on the gallows. *All* the way down. . . . But to take us with Him all the way up."

After that I showed him " In an Indian Abbey," and one or two other books by the same thoughtful and sympathetic writer, so that he could follow up what we had been saying about evil and pain—the only problem which has really sprung to harass men's minds out of those years of war. Then he talked a little about when he could be received, and he did, in fact, become a Catholic the very day before Mr. Travers died, so Barbara had that happiness, too, in her sorrow.

Chapter XVII

DECEMBER came. The skies wept, and the streets were full of sodden leaves. Frost refused to clean the atmosphere, and yet the nights were raw and the cold entered your flesh like rust. Even Barbara, who was staying at the Nazareth Convent, was depressed and unlike herself. She had gone, after all, to live with Lady Sophia for a while, and I think she foresaw that her entry among the Poor Clares might be postponed. Meanwhile, she had to arrange about the furniture of the Wilchurch house, which was being given up, and had come to stay near by for a fortnight.

One morning the Sergeant came to call, looking worried.

"There's two things I want to speak to you about, Father," said he; "one's silly and one's important. Ernestine and I have had our first difference; and we've agreed to refer the matter to you."

I foresaw the lifelong enmity of both of them, whatever I said (for the Sergeant would think my advice bad if I agreed with Miss Silver, and Miss Silver would regret it the moment she'd done what she'd wanted to), and so I held my hands up invoking mercy.

He smiled a pale smile.

"She wants," said he, "to study social conditions at close quarters, and to go the round of those London doss-houses in the character of one who has nowhere else to sleep and spend the night in each of 'em in turn. When I disapprove, which I most emphatically do, she says, 'Are we taking this social work seriously, or are we not? If so, it's up to us to have first-hand knowledge.' She says she can't come to harm, because they're in public streets and too full of folk for risks to be run. I put my foot down and say I won't have it, and she puts hers down and turns it into a duty, it having simply started as a wild dream, and no duty about it whatever; and at last we agree to refer it to you. With all due respect, Father, I don't think it's a thing as we need to refer to you, and when married I don't propose to trouble you with continual decisions *re* our domestic concerns; but seeing that this is our first divergence," said he with dignity, "I thought it would be good to get your guidance."

"Well, listen, old son. It seems to me that apart from its general desirability or the reverse, it is an experiment that wouldn't succeed. I suppose she'd dress up in poor clothes. But she couldn't disguise her voice. Even if she could talk Cockney she couldn't do it well enough to take in Londoners; and I doubt if a refined woman would get into a position which would make it necessary for her to go *there* for a night's lodging, not until she'd got very very sick, and down and out indeed. And Miss Silver can't look that. I'm bound to say she looks extremely well, especially since her engagement. If she could use a very broad Scotch accent or an Irish brogue, she might get through with it. As it is, she'd be instantly recognized, and she'd be taken for a detective or an inquisitor of some sort, or at best a newspaper-woman or a novelist. But they'd resent that frightfully, unless she knew how to talk to them intimately, and put 'em at their ease. And she'd have no idea how to do that. Then there's this. I expect she'd consent to this, wouldn't she—she'd go to one that was at least *worked* respectably—I mean, by the Salvationists, or something like that. She wouldn't want to go where—well, where no one cares what happens. Well, even in a respectable one it would—well, let's see. It would cost her 5d.; that includes a bed and cocoa p.m., and tea a.m., without food. Now even though they have a vermin-proof mattress and covering, well, that's no real good. There's sheets, too, and those only get changed once a week . . . and the beds are only a few inches apart, and no one undresses, you know. She couldn't escape 'em. Think of the trenches. *You* know! Then—well, she'd find excellent human nature to study; but she couldn't judge it. She has no background. She'd not be able to *judge* the language. . . . Nor the arguments. They'll *all* decide, you know, that you're better off without your husband than with him, if you can keep the kiddies dressed and fed; and, upon my word! if you realize how the one occupation of their men is standing in the streets and betting—well, on whether the next woman that looks out of a window has her hair in papers or not—that's how their money goes—you wonder if their wives aren't right. She'd not know what to say if they asked her opinion. And suppose a drunk lady wanted to fight her? Drunks go there, or the police take 'em there when they judge they're respectable. The police wouldn't think of taking a respectable drunk woman to one of the other doss-houses."

He heaved a great sigh of relief.

"Well, Father, I think that's that. All the sorrier I am for having

to suggest what now I do. My job at Mr. Travers' is unfortunately over; I shall have to look for a job as you yourself have pointed out. And I'm anxious not to put off my marriage." He enlarged a little on his gratitude for the arrangement that had held good so far. Then he reminded me that he'd accompanied Lady Sophia and Barbara to Linborough when Barbara went there after the funeral.

"Lady Sophia," he said, "though making no offer—for, of course, she would consult you before doing that—asked me if I would *like* her to offer me the managership of one department of her Settlement in London, and if so, she would apply to you for your opinion. I could live on the salary, seeing that quarters would be supplied; the work would be congenial to me and to my wife, as she then, I hope, would be. I should like to marry," said he (still rather pleased with his accuracy of formula), "immediately after the Closed Season. My wife would have plenty to do then, both writing and active work, and we should remain in close touch with the Guild, and even strengthen the links between it and the Settlement. Wishing to be fully above board, I now place the matter before your Reverence, and though," he said, suddenly becoming natural, "it'd break my heart to go away from dear old Wilchurch, please God we'll be in very close touch still, Father, and it looks as if I owe you an' Wilchurch fair everything, having obtained along of you the Faith and a wife into the bargain, and a Catholic one more*over*."

For Miss Silver was to be received before Christmas.

So we talked that over, and decided we would like Lady Sophia to consider her exploration of avenues satisfactorily accomplished, and to ask me to ask the Sergeant to ask her to ask him.

I concluded, therefore, the same night, when I came in and found that Barbara and he were waiting and wanted to see me, that they'd called about that.

The room was rather dark, and they were sitting with their backs to the light, so I didn't see them clearly.

The Sergeant stood up. He had an evening paper in his hand.

"I regret to say——" he began, and his voice made me jump. "I —perhaps you've not seen the paper—there's a bit of bad news——"

I looked at Barbara more closely.

"My dear girl," I said, going to her, "what's the matter?"

She broke into a tempest of tears. I took her hands, but she pulled them away.

"Oh, never mind *me!*" she cried. "Ask *him*. Make him show you. Be *quick*."

She pushed me towards the Sergeant.

He showed me a paragraph. The Corporal was arrested on a charge of murdering Nellie Smarle, somewhere in Rotherhithe. He'd acknowledged it . . . he'd sat on the head of the stairs and waited, apparently, to be taken.

I couldn't assimilate that for a minute, especially as I was afraid Barbara was going to be ill.

"Go to the kitchen," I said to the Sergeant. "Fetch a cup of tea. Nothing else. And then get a taxi."

The strain of the last few months had been quite too much for her, and the crash of the enormous hopes she'd been building for the Corporal had left her without any power of thinking. However, she drank her tea, and we took her back to the Convent. I had unlimited trust in the Reverend Mother, and I put her in safe hands.

"It's impossible for her to sleep yet," I said, "or to rest. But I think if you make the Stations of the Cross with her, that'll be best. She'll need that. Then judge for yourself. If she needs a sleeping draught, try one. And I should think a good deal of work—Christmas work—as soon as possible. I'll wire for Lady Sophia. She'll give what even you can't, Reverend Mother, and you will what she can't."

"Now," I said, when the Sergeant and I got outside again, "tell me about all this."

The poor man was desperate. It was all his fault. Barbara was at the Guild offices when the evening paper came, and the Sergeant had glanced through it, and when he saw the paragraph had cried out. He cursed his lack of control, for Barbara had turned round and seen his face, and though he'd tried at first to prevent her reading it, she knew far too well that it wasn't anything trivial, nor personal to him, especially *because* he tried to keep the paper away. With her terrible intuition, and also because, I suppose, she always had the Corporal rather near her consciousness, she jumped to the conclusion it was about him and that it was dreadful. So, unable to help himself, and sure that he'd better be there when she read it, he handed the paper over, and they had come straight round to our house, and had waited an appalling hour for my return.

The morning paper added next to nothing, and after turning over a number of plans for getting at the Corporal, a grotesque inspiration reached me that I'd better try Cecil Calthrop. So I wired to ask if I could lunch with him in London on Friday, which was the first day I could possibly get away. He wired back, characteristically,

" Right Princes Grill Room One C absolutely topping prospect see you again turned down lunch adorable lady your sake come mend broken heart mine I mean."

I arrived then in London wondering how I could possibly cope with Cecil Calthrop, and made my way to Prince's.

At the bottom of the stairs, the pontifical personage established there asked me with contemptuous deference if I wanted a table for one. I asked if Mr. Calthrop hadn't engaged one for two. Every line of his face and body altered and he enquired if I meant the *H*onourable Cecil, and I said yes, and a small army of waiters appeared from nowhere and removed as much of my clothing as they decently could and then escorted me to a corner table, where I sat down and waited. The contrast between Prince's and Cecil, and Frank, wherever he was, began to get on my nerves, when a little after one a fearful commotion upstairs indicated the boy's approach.

" Sorry, sorry, sorry," he began, pulling off his gloves, and tossing his raiment right and left into expectant arms. " Only just up. Nervous wreck. Debaucheries of the metropolis. Drinks, please. Two mixed vermouths: slightly more French than Italian; and wash, mind you, merely *wash* the glasses with gin first. And book of the words, please."

At this point he collapsed into his chair, and at last looked at me. He frowned.

" Ah," said he. " Business evidently. Bad business, I'm afraid. Not yet, Father. You've a little time to spare after feeding, haven't you ? Let's start on oysters. Manage two dozen ? One ? right; two dozen oysters natural, to push off with. Then out-of-works. Friday, isn't it ? We make meagre, waiter. To be followed by Soles at the female miller. Trite, but palatable. Omelette at the rum flamboyant. Suit you, Father ? Mushroom savoury. And drinks ? *not* fizzy. Ostentatious at lunch and unsuitable to Advent. White, anyway. No. 122, please. Ah ! Admire the brown bread and butter. They know how I like it cut: a mere film. Difficult to hold, but the *only* way. . . ."

He prattled continuously during the meal and stopped me when I tried to talk of what I'd come for.

" The Corporal ?" he asked. " Of course it is. No need to tell me. Eat, there's a good man. And don't talk till coffee."

Coffee came, and he looked with distaste at the liqueur-list.

" Curaçoa," he said, " even with half brandy, would be cloying

after that lunch. *Either* pure brandy, or I *think*, since we've had no sweets, Allasch. They have a couple of bottles left, which they keep for me. Know Allasch ?"

" Kümmel, isn't it ?" I said.

" Tut," said he. " This is the real stuff. Kümmel's crystal and emeralds looking through it; the *really* real Allasch is diamonds, emeralds, and a flash of genuine sapphires in it. . . . Now then, what's the matter ?"

I told him in outline.

He said " Aha," and brooded.

I said: " I thought your father would perhaps get us on to somebody. I want to know where Frank is; and I want to communicate with him at once; and, in fact, see him; and I don't want a warder present; and if there has to be one, I want it to be conveyed to him unofficially that he's to be out of earshot. I've had too much of talking to prisoners on opposite sides of a table with a warder at the end of it. With Frank Newnes it would be fatal. Here's a name or two," I added, pushing a list across to him, " which I thought might be useful."

He read it, put it to one side, and meditated till his cigarette went out.

Then he said:

" Dearest papa's no good. He doesn't like me just now. And anyhow he wouldn't."

He thought again. Then he roused himself.

" Paper !" he cried, and the waiter, Heaven knows whence, produced quite a lot.

He wrote a number of messages.

" Get those off quick," he said. " Make sure of the car first, and the one to Mr. Penruddock. Teddy Penruddock's the best we can do," he said to me. " Frightful rip, but an A1 Catholic at heart. Run round with him a lot, but always say good-night at a certain moment. I've told him to be in at all costs from 3 p.m. on. Else he may be resting between lunch and cocktail time. He'll get us through to Sir Hubert, and *he* will to Eck and Ecclesleigh, and if *he* can't do what we want, no one can."

" I know Hughie Eck," I said.

" Aha ! Well, he's as good a papist as they make 'em, though orthodox. He and your Sergeant'd make a good couple."

He remained drumming with his fingers on the table, till, after a very short time really, the waiter announced the car.

It was bright purple, and torpedo shaped, and after we'd lain down in it, it shot away at nerve-wracking speed towards the Embankment.

It was easy to find where the Corporal was, and we then turned back into Whitehall.

"What a life!" Cecil lamented. And he gave me an outline of his doings lately. "Absolutely shattering to the nervous system: Sanatogen the only thing. Absolutely flattened out, I am." He began to murmur a sort of hymn to Sanatogen, and with the fantastic perversity of a day large parts of which have absolutely vanished from my memory, the rhymes fixed themselves maddeningly in my brain.

"Sanatogen! the latter men are flatter then? What matter when Sanatogen is there to make 'em fat again! Sanatogen! A cat or hen, a rat or wren will thrive upon Sanatogen! Sanatogen! The Upper Ten grow sane upon Sanatogen. . . ." A policeman held out his arm. We halted under it. "Oh batter scatter shatter men, but leave me my Sanatogen!" said Cecil to the policeman, who nearly arrested us as lunatics.

The subsequent interviews were at least a nightmare, and sanity seemed not to return till we went to Lord Eck's room. His huge serenity forced into shape the situation, which the mask of imbecility donned by Mr. Penruddock, and Sir Hubert's champing annoyance, had driven quite out of my grasp.

It was scarcely four when the purple car, ghostly now in the shadows and hectic under the lights, glided southwards once again.

The prison loomed up, an absurd, cynically decorative, castle, cruelly different from the rigorous paint, plaster, and steel of its interior.

"I won't come in," said Cecil. "Hughie's letter's good enough. I'd contribute nothing; they might conceivably think me cheeky. I'll buzz round," he added, "to a convent or two. Get the nuns busy, and some kiddies on to it, what? Now don't you talk, Father. Less you say, the better, I reckon."

He pulled his great bowler off, and waited, vivid in the headlights, with his purple overcoat, his black and white check tie and trousers, and his bronze-purple socks and soft brown shoes.

I knew he wanted my blessing. I gave it, and he returned to dance on the tightrope of his temperament over the gulf of London.

After another interview, I was taken down to a room I knew already. I loathed its sea-green walls, with their chocolate dado, edged with orange.

" I'll go and give instructions, sir," said the warder. " I trust you to be tactful. And should he be a bit light-headed, look to me."

" Oh; trust me." I said. " And he'll be all right after the first minute or two."

After a quarter of an hour he returned with Frank, who already had the prisoner's cowed way of not looking at things. When he saw me he became quite grey and steadied himself by the table. The warder watched him carefully.

I took his hands and said, " Hullo, Frank."

He licked his lips.

" Hullo. Found me, 'ave you ?"

" Sure. This was the first day I could get down."

" Seen it in the papers, I reckon ?"

" Sergeant saw it !" I said, smiling.

" Huh ! Sergeant ! Through with me, I reckon, ain't he ?"

" No more than I am."

Then at last he studied me, and his hands in mine became alive.

" It's really you, wot's come ?"

" Of course it is. Who else ? Me, right enough."

He coughed, and sat down on the edge of the table, still watching my eyes carefully, and with his lips compressed. Then:

" I done it, you know," he said.

The warder, who was just going down the room, halted nervously.

" With these hands," said the boy, looking at them almost, you'd have said, as strange to him. So I held them harder till the physical sensation cut across his thought.

Then I sat down beside him on the table, and the warder went quite to the end of the room.

" Know where I'm feeling myself to be ?"

" Where ?"

" 'Ospital. But you wait. Better nor that. Years an' years be'ind the 'ospital. Couldn't call me Corporal, you couldn't. Kid, if you choose. Reg'lar kid, I'm become. Kiddie Newnes. But kid in 'ospital. Because 'ospital was where I knew you, see ? Knew me in 'ospital, you did; but never me as kid. Yet that's me now. So—me, kid; and us, in 'ospital, see ?"

I began to see.

" 'Ospital first," he went on ; " 'ow's all the boys ?"

" Hallinan's happy," I said. " I heard from them; sort of pre-Christmas good wishes. Taffy's happy. Still gardening in Scotland.

No relapse. Very few of the men are the same. None in your ward. Filled up with ex-soldiers of the county regiments mostly."

"An' Sergeant? You mentioned Sergeant?"

"He's getting married! He's settling down in London. He sends you his love."

"Huh! Never nothing but settled," said he, smiling, "wasn't Sergeant. His love, did he?" and he broke off, meditating.

"So did Miss Barbara," I said, rather anxious about what he'd recollect. But his mind went straight back behind the Fair to her first Christmas visit, two years ago now, all but a very few days.

"'Er love?" he repeated. "An' me ready to kiss 'er shoes, and always was. Sun, moon, an' stars, she was, says Private Snell, and I ain't forgotten it. Right for once, was Snell. Wot'll you say to 'er from me?"

"I'll say you thank her for it, and that you'll keep remembering it, and that she can trust you. Her father died quite lately, and she wants friends she can rely on."

He looked at me, feeling himself again, and smiled wryly.

"That's for 'ospital," said he. "But be'ind all that 'ave I gone. Call me kid if it pleases you. Dreamin' dreams, I am, of where I'd like to go to. Always restless, as a kid, an' if it hadn't been for London, there'd be nowhere I 'adn't seen by now. Guessed it all, I did. Guessed it, an' then the advertisements. Canada. Snow, and nothin' but snow, an' grey sky an' flamin' sunset. Oo! An' big boots an' furry gloves, an' me free an' drinkin' in the frost. And India an' Shanghai an' deserts! Gold an' scarlet, an' the drums, an' bells an' them queer temples an' the sunlight. Me blinkin' in the sunlight. Huh! Stretching meself naked to the heat! Not a ounce o' flesh on me that shouldn't be. Alive all through meself! All round the world, I am, since I been in here."

"Was that what you always wanted?"

"Always something *else*," said he, "same as you said to the Aussie, or 'e told me. An' when all's said an' done, still somethin' else. And," said he, "there'll be no London, now, to stop me 'avin' it."

I didn't know how to break in on that.

He turned round, radiant.

"There ain't no London in the way," he said. "There ain't no shop, nor no pub, nor yet there ain't no lock upon me. Locked, I was. Locked even in 'ospital. The key's turned an' out I've come. Handcuffs gone; equipment gone; free as the air, inside o' my head. Free, I am."

I still wasn't sure how far he was hysterical.

"The words you'll say to me now," he said, "I can let 'em in. In already if you asks me. An' I talks to God, an' I hears 'Im. Why not? 'Cos there ain't no London in me 'ead, nor yet no shop, nor yet no me . . . see wot I mean? None of the me as was always play-acting to be me; getting in 'twixt you an' the me I *am*, the original and one and only Frank, underneath me dreams and me thoughts an' the bluff an' the play-actin'; an' if it's you that's 'ere, then you an' me meets proper, and I'm free to act as you bid."

"You believe in God? You pray, Frank?"

"Huh! When didn't I? Every time. Pray? Always prayin' was the me the other me had its foot on the mouth of. Christ? Far-ther, I tell you, after I done it, the 'ole world bust up round me. Shell into a dug-out wasn't nothing to it. I come out of that room like as if I'd been buried *afore* the shell come, and it blows me *out* o' the black an' stiflin' heat into the air. An' I goes an' sits on the stairs. And Christ, He comes and sits beside me. Takes me 'ands, 'E does, same as you do, and strokes top of me head and back o' me neck, and best of all, looks at me, 'E does; into me eyes, an' no sham me lookin' back. . . ."

"I can't live here, Frank, you know. But I'll be able to come at intervals till—till something's settled and——"

"You make no mistake," said he. "Sergeant himself couldn't be more settled than wot I am."

"Hush. I'll call on the chaplain, and explain that you're to be instructed——"

"Entered meself R.C.," he interrupted.

"Very well. He'll finish your instruction. And then I'll come and receive you into the Church and give you your communion."

"Communion?" he said. "Goin' all day to it, I am. Christ, 'E kisses me."

I gave him my rosary.

"You just keep this if you may," I said. "I'm not quite sure. Just hang on to it while possible. I'll arrange with the chaplain so as to know if there's anything special happening. Do whatever you're doing *as hard as you can*. Be quite sure you're going to sleep. See? When you go to bed, *sleep*. Be sure you'll sleep. Without dreaming. And occupy your mind with what the chaplain says. Work, and think that over coolly, and sleep when you're told to. Promise?"

He laughed a little.

"You're afraid for me 'ead," he said. "Don't you worry. That's all right. Swingin' about I am a bit, wot with one thing givin' me such a shove, an' then another. But steady I am, inside. Somethin' holdin' me. Don't you worry."

All the same, he quite suddenly went chalk-white. His face glistened with sweat, and he caught hold of my coat.

"You'll be with me when necessary?" he said.

"I promise."

"An' you'll be thinkin' of me *all the while* from now on?"

"As far as it's humanly possible. I'll arrange for *someone* to be thinking of you all the time. Kiddies or nuns or *someone*. In the presence of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament."

"Ah," said he, recovering. "I 'ave 'Im with me. Forgot, I did, for a moment. Reckon 'E don't, though."

So I left him for a while.

Chapter XVIII

WHEN the due time came an arrangement was arrived at and I was able to establish myself on a footing which enabled me to see as much of Frank as I wished.

We used to sit side by side on his brown-blanketed bed with the tiny window on our left, the door with its observation hole to the right, and the blank wall opposite, three feet or so away, and nothing assuredly to distract us. At other times I sat on the foot of the bed, and he cross-legged at the head of it and leaning back. Sometimes, when his nerves were altogether too much for him, he lay flat, though he never spoke about that sort of feeling, or perhaps not more than twice altogether.

This extraordinary lad had, as he said, recovered his boyishness more than I'd thought possible in a man; for though he'd seemed at first of the sort that seems destined never to grow old, and then does quite suddenly, it wasn't a boy's *look* that had flashed in his squirrel's eyes, but either the rather dreadful air of a clever animal, that might claw you suddenly, or, an exhausting experience which had aged him more, by far, than any years could.

But now, his eyes shone rather than flashed, and he kept breaking into the most gentle and bewildering smiles, even when he said what you'd have thought to be dictated by despair. To tell the truth, he had despaired long ago and comprehensively of himself and the whole of the gifts of life.

The first time we had met under the new conditions, he said, looking at me out of the corner of his eyes:

"Funny how we've both of us got our way!"

"Have we?"

"Me bein' able to see as much of you as I want, an' all to meself."

"It's odd how little we ever have seen of one another at all comfortably."

"Oo, didn't I hate old Sergeant when he first come! Absorbin' you like, when I wanted you settin' on me bed same as before. Always yappin' to Sergeant, an' religion into the bargain."

"I think I used to come as much as before. And I always used to go to dozens of others, anyhow. And it was a long time before you and I made what I call real acquaintance."

"Ho! An' didn't I hate you them first weeks after the first time of all, when you *wouldn't* come."

"I didn't want to thrust myself on you!" I said, smiling at a memory.

"I knew that, for sure. But I'd kid meself you was offended by what I said first time—remember that? Them was my cheeky days. When I sees you marchin' down the ward, black an' 'oly, and sticks me head up an' shouts, 'Does Jesus love me? Ah-men,' an' you nips round and collars me hard by the ear, an' says, grinnin', but lookin' at me like gimlets, 'I expects 'E does, but you don't sound like one of my lads. I'm a R.C. priest,' and I couldn't answer nothin', swelp me! I hadn't nothin' to say. An' you sits there and fires off a string o' questions at me as though I were under arrest, but grinnin' quiet, and then you 'ops it, an' fer days after that you no more than nodded sharp as you went by, but grinnin', an' me gettin' wild at bein' take no more notice of, till the time when they was all of 'em asleep save me, an' I says for you to come an' 'ave a yarn. And wasn't I ready to knife you for makin' me say it first!"

"I felt sure you would. I always liked your wide-awake eyes, Frank, and your old forelock," I said.

"Not much of *'im* left," he said, with that detachment which kept appalling me.

"But how have I got *my* way? D'you mean you accepting to be taught the Catholic Faith? Certainly I'm grateful to God for that."

"Aw. But for why do I accept it? Remember wot you said in that old church when you was starin' at that big cross 'angin' in mid-air like? 'Reckon you've got to be brought right down,' you says, and you repeats it, '*right* down first.' An' that was ice in my veins," said he, for the first time with a little shudder. "That were a real—well, I mean that *changed* somethin'. I wouldn't let on, an' kidded I was indignant with you for so much as suggesting me not succeedin', see? From then on, I knew I wouldn't. Ho! Sure on it. I foresees it all; me tumblin' down a cliff like, an' catchin' an' catchin' at the twigs and the stones, an' all comin' out in me 'ands, an' breakin' off, an' me fetchin' up flat at the bottom, all me bones broken. But that were a thought as went through an' went down an' stayed under, somewhere in the marrow of me mind, in a manner

o' speakin', an' for weeks 'e didn't come up again, though there 'e was, sleepin,' an' then 'alf-wakin' an' stretchin' hisself, and growin' strong. . . . Quite a big boy 'e become, that old thought, afore 'e'd 'arf done."

"Meanwhile, you went on pretending he didn't exist and really fighting him."

"Fought him in this very church," said he, oddly, and feeling himself actually back, I think, in the Cathedral. "I knew it was offerin' me somethin', was this old church, as I told you, an' I says, '*Naow!* Whatever it is, I won't 'ave it. I'll 'ave me shop. I *will* 'ave that shop.' An' I did; long as I *did* 'ave it. . . ." He sighed a little.

"When I says," he resumed, "that were the first occasion, I mean, that's the first occasion as he went right in. But there never was a time when 'e weren't floatin' around an' settlin' in a little way. Fer now, Far-ther, you listen. This is it. I ain't sorry fer 'avin' been brought right down, not fer this reason, if fer no other. I'm down on bed-rock an' not in mid-air, an' if I sounds talkin' silly, you wait. That there Cross, it 'ad the right to be in mid-air, an' if you think that's sillier, you wait again, an' I'll tell you. For that's number two!"

"Well, tell away."

"Well, you knows the restless lad I was, an' *am*, for sure. Though I've give over seein' them pictures o' Canada an' such as I told you on first time you come 'ere. Well, I *wouldn't* go right down, not to *nothin'*. Wot do I mean? Not to the real truth o' things, not about God, not about me, not about me job, nor me pals, nor girls, nor money, nor nothink. I always was some'ow cuttin' me antics in mid-air an' wondering 'ow long I could stop there. For why? 'Cos I knew inside me I was 'oldin' meself up in mid-air by me own teeth, in a manner o' speakin'. That's acrobats for you! Reg'lar acrobat in life, I was. 'Itchin' meself up by the seat o' me own trousers an' 'angin' myself on a peg I was sustainin' in me other 'and. Nonsense, any such a life is. An' lonely! Strewth! Never nothin' else, I wasn't. But wilful to *be* lonely. Proud of it. But perishin' from cold, to tell truth, fair starved with it."

"You were unlike other people, Frank; people who are 'different' are bound to be lonely. Because of your vitality, I suppose. The tremendous buck you put into things. And never went on at one thing long enough to get sick of it and do it half-heartedly. Then the war and your wound tired you inside your mind, as I always told

you, though you only believed it once in a way. But when you were walking about and trying for a job, and had a succession of little knocks, and didn't find the success you needed, the vitality ran out, and you didn't do things instinctively any more, but laboriously, with definite conscious choices; and they ceased to be effective. In a sense, as long as your absurd old forelock was a spontaneous result of your you-ness—see ?—it was a very lovable old forelock; but once you began to trade on it and try to live up to *it*, so to say, well—that meant it had become a mere stunt. You'd ceased to have the power to do your acrobatics naturally."

" Don't you go criticizin' my forelock," said he, smiling with the corners of his eyes. " For it was a good friend to me many a time, an' I nourished it most affectionate. But 'ow can you go tickin' me off for usin' my will an' not livin' on the instinck o' the moment ? Weren't that the very thing you was always wishful for me to do ? Get the golden thread to 'ang on to, an' not drift ? Choose strong, and not be shoved ? 'Ow about old Tomlinson ?"

He suddenly doubled himself up on the bed and clutched his head, but rose up quickly, though with his face haggard.

" I were thinkin' of them rides in the chair an' the movies," said he, deprecatingly, " an' them old tea-rooms, an' you an' me. But huh ! Wot's the matter with *this ?* Ain't this you'n me, same as ever ? An' samer."

" Well, I think, using your will and thinking was necessary. But I also think its first effect would be to bring you down a lot. It's a blood-curdling thing, at first, to see right through one's self and one's life. And that will or no will, one can't manage life. And that the only thing one has a chance of managing is one's inside soul; and that you can't manage *that*, alone. Grip yourself grimly together into some sort of shape, you can, or for a while you can. But you know that life needs more than grimness; and besides, you may come to hate the shape, hate your success and your will—for what's it *for* ? If my success is useless, why succeed ?"

" Ar, don't touch on that side o' things. Wastin' precious time. For I'm not doin' that no more. I went right down on the pavement an' there I lay, an' the walkers trampled over me to an' fro; but God, 'E looked down through the gas-light and 'twas my eyes and 'Is . . . starin' at one another; an' I blinks a bit; an' I screws me own up tight, and then blink again, an' then—" he laughed outright—" I winks; winks back. Wink of recognition like. Recognize a pal. For I were 'appy, lyin' under the 'oofs an' the boots, an' God's eyes

on mine. But p'raps I'm goin' a bit too fast . . . 'twasn't till quite the end, an' *after* the end, as I *knew* that, an' kept me own eyes steady. . . ."

* * * * *

Another time he said:

" Wot's queer about me is this. I seem to 'ave jumped right onto the things you wanted me to jump onto without seein' 'ow I got there. 'Ere I *am*, an' nothing'll push me off. But 'ow I got there, 'oo knows ? I sees in a manner 'ow I got *down*, I don't mean down to doin' what I never thought I would do nor could, for I never *wanted* to 'urt no one, not to say *'urt ;* but down to the solid; down out o' mid-air: down to where God is and meself. But Jesus Christ ? Ar. 'Ow I got to 'Im, *I* dunno. But 'ere 'E is."

" He is ?"

" Sits on me bed," said he.

I looked carefully at him; but though there was a half scared look in his eyes, it wasn't an inmost scare, if I may attempt to express the inexpressible, nor a fear of that Presence itself, but the little scare that comes with all puzzlement, and he was puzzled how the unmistakable Christ had *come* there.

" Sits on me bed," he said. " An' walks about in the yard with me. Doesn't talk; but 'E eats and 'E drinks in me bowl; an' 'E 'olds me hands, same as you do. But don't you go for to be proud," he said, smiling, " 'cos you're a ghost compared to wot *'E* is."

I said the only thing that came into my head.

" I can't think what it must have meant to you, being so lonely, and *proud* of being lonely. Because you've always wanted friends. How defiant you were, Frank, longing for friendship and always pushing it off."

" 'Fraid o' bein' 'ooked," said he, smiling again. " Now *I* meant to 'ook you, sure thing; resolved upon it; but you me ? Not you, not in these days. But sure, a 'eart for me friends 'ave I got, an' went nearest to gettin' 'em when I chummed up with two as got killed as I told you on. See ? Nearly got it, but didn't last. An' never 'avin' 'ad no parents . . . Mentioned me sister, didn't I ? Well, she never weren't no sister; leastways 'arf sister. Who me father was, I dunno. An' after me, me mother goes wrong and disappears. Streets, I 'spects. And so they 'ates me, an' I'm give over to a 'ome, after a bit, but I were a little devil, for sure, and I done a getaway; an' when I looks in, on and off, to see my sister, she don't want me, an' she marries, and when you told me I'd 'ave

to look after 'er, I nearly told you this wot I'm tellin' now; but, well, I shut meself up just then and there, some'ow bein' wishful you should *not* think me quite on me lonesome, but with something to go back to or to fit into. But never fit into nothin', I didn't."

"But you fell in love, Frank, I'm sure, and soon. You told me you really had—once."

"An' that's another odd thing," said he. "For at not quite seventeen you don't think for a lad to be able to fall in love proper. But I never was no particular age. O' course I'd 'opped around a lot afore that; tried most things; but didn't bite, none o' that. But —call it kid's love, if you like; kid's love is real. Leastways mine was. An' then *she* spoils it; see? Makes me lose me 'ead with 'er. 'Nuff said. After that it weren't no good. All the beauty gone; all the fields withered, if you follows me, just the same as the rest. An', not to exonerate meself, 'twas 'er fault, take it all in all. Not mine. She done the withering."

"Did that harden you?"

"True for you. Nothin' special, afore then, I wasn't. Quite gentle, I was, an' a bit of a dreamer, though 'oppin' round like mad. But then I blossoms out! *Then* I becomes Kid Newnes as they all on 'em knew of. An' all goes down before me. One job after another, and one girl after another; quick change and howlin' success, every time. And then; ar! Now this is it, I reckon. I fall in love again! Properly *in*. Gertie, 'er name was."

Now he looked really scared.

"I ain't remembered this since. Leastways I reckon I always remembered it, but think of it I *would* not. The devil he gets into me. Nice girl she was, and real lovin' too. An' just when all's goin' well, I says sudden to meself, Now it's *my* turn. *I'll* spoil it, this time. *I'll* do the witherin."

He narrated the tragic episode, insisting, with extreme horror in his voice, that his *pleasure* had been to see the girl wilt and refuse to believe it when he said deliberately that he'd had enough of her company, and was through with her.

"She hung on to me, she did, sayin', 'You don't *mean* it, Frank? You'd never do it?' But I laughs light, an' I says I'd been tryin' an experiment, and I goes off, screamin' red rage at meself, for that was the only *real* murder I ever done, an' 'twas a double one, on 'er an' on me own love. For I loved her, and murdered me love deliberate. Now no man couldn't do that, left to 'imself. Therefore, 'twas the devil in me. And after that, *hard*? Huh! Steel

wire, I was, all through me; steel wire an' whipcord. Till you comes an' makes a ravin' maniac of me, very near, in 'ospital."

"A raving maniac?" I said, smiling.

"Feeling meself meltin'; fallin' into shreds. Bein' pulled to shreds. Not by you, but by God and Christ, I reckon, but it were you as made it impossible for me to keep away from 'em, you an' the Sergeant and that Aussie."

"Chiefly Jock."

"Gawd!" he said, "that Jock! . . ."

"Now," he said, "I'll tell you all you wants to know about Nellie Smarle."

"Nothing you don't want to tell."

"Ar. I'd always tell wot's worth telling. Well, that shop. I told you I had me teeth into that shop. It were that or nothing. Leastways, that, suicide, or you. And by you, I mean that old Church an' God. Well, I did *not* act crook by that shop, nor by them as I borrowed off, whatever they may say. If it 'adn't been for the boiler bustin' an' ruinin' arf the 'ouse *and* me stock; an' a mad whim I 'ad to give a present to a girl wot was down and out, for to get to 'Uddersfield where 'er home was which I didn't ought to 'ave done, me still owing; an' that pal o' mine wot I was at Brighton with, askin' sudden for 'is money, which *bein'* a pal I thought I 'ad to pay first; well, but for that an' trade bein' rotten an' prices 'igh an' fish bein' a gamble anyways, I'd 'ave been there still. But when all that ker-lapsed, I really *was* down an' out meself. For why? 'Adn't got nothin', *and* no spirit to get it. An' I was down Eltham way, one time, makin' wot I could on the edge of a fair there an' ready to pick pockets, so desperate was I, when that there Nellie Smarle she sees me; an' now this is where I feels shy," said he unexpectedly.

"Oh, well; don't," I said.

"There's no way o' puttin' it but one," he said. "She developed a passion for me, see? Takes 'em like that sudden, at times, specially 'er sort. Fell in love with me *plonk*. Determined on it. An' offers me a billet in 'er show; Orgies she always 'ad; and 'ad the option of them Gondolas if she could but put down the needful. But put it down she could not, not bein' able *also* to pay the men to work 'em; so corner me she did. Sees I'm starvin'; sees I'll work without pay for me grub; nets me—talk of 'ookin'! Offers me the job, the grub, the bunk, an' 'er lovin' 'eart into the bargain. And *then* she can manage the premium for them Gondolas. So mopped up I was. And *that* were not the worst."

"What was?"

"Made a mess o' things, in a sense, you did," he said, reflectively. "Bottled me up so long, you did, though not exactly that, but forcing me to bottle *meself* up, that I breaks out in a way I 'ates to think on; for *I* falls in love with 'er, in a 'ideous way. 'Ates it, I do, when I thinks on it. Yet so it were. And I loves and I 'ates; and I meets you at the Fair, an' you drives me frantic, an' the moment comes when after the Gondolas went bust—for make money on 'em I *could* not—and in the winter, well, there was 'er an' me in that filthy room at Rotherhithe, for stick to me she would, spite of all, and tho' scared of me and 'ating me like 'ell, and me 'er, and well, I comes 'ome desperate, and she taunts me, an' she ridicules you, an' she says I'm spittin' in your face each time I comes to 'er and that she's wiped the street with you, an' your superior ways an' your Jesus Christ, an' I goes mad, real mad; I sees you, 'er, Gertie and me shop an' the Church an' all simultaneous, an' I takes 'er by the 'air, and I—but you knows the rest," he said, and then lay down quietly.

"Is this where Our Lord begins to come in?"

"Sat by me on the stairs," said he, in a dream. "Sat by me when the lodgers rushed screaming up, an' there was me, sittin' waitin'. By me when the coppers come. By me at the station. An' now on me bed. Sittin'. Lookin'."

"And you like His look?" I asked.

He turned towards me, quite simply.

"All bloody, 'E is. Oo! Down an' out? Talk of *'Im!* Couldn't be no downer. An' thin! An' awful eyes—deep; black all round 'em. Struck 'Im they 'ad. Torn at 'Is 'air. Terrible. But *'E* don't mind. Glad, 'E is. Wouldn't want *not* to be. Knows as I *want* 'Im to be down. Further down nor me. Oo! Never none so deep."

He paused. The afternoon had darkened, and no sky shone through the window. Only through the door, the light that forbade the very nights to be fully dark, put reflections on the walls and the ceiling. It was good to be thus stripped; bare wall, bare walls and roof and floor; the bed to sit on; a pail—that was all. And a silence that you know was silence, because of the rare low sounds that came across it—long sighs from the town far off, very distant whistles, moans of motor 'bus and tram; and within the building, the echo of the echo of a footfall, or a man moving somewhere. . . . Long since, in the summer evening, all gold and amethyst, sounds had thus stolen up, fused sounds of cries and songs, very distant, into the house where

Reggie Orwylstree had been offering his crucifixion, and had ransomed Blake; sounds, pale lights, floating shadows—the world floated and the noises sighed themselves out, and the lights became shadows. What was there, save he and I? He, I, and the Man of Sorrows sitting there, suffering me to hold the hands He held, and watch the face into whose eyes He looked, the quiet face, the eyes too calm for tears, the eyes held steady by those other eyes, too deep, too penetrating for the blood and grime to blind them, unfathomable eyes, eyes of Christ that contained the knowledge of all that was in man.

Jock, long ago, through a Christmas night, I, and the most Blessed Sacrament. . . .

To-night, Christ, I, and Frank between us; Christ round us; we, in Christ; I trying to see through Christ's eyes; Frank reading himself in Christ's eyes, Christ watching Himself dawn in Frank's; I, on the knees of my spirit, trying to understand into what mystery I was admitted.

* * * * *

Another time he said:

"Told you I'd have rejoined the army, if it hadn't been for me leg. I've been having pictures again; but not of the fancy places I was for travellin' to. Real places; places I been to. Yardley Camp an' trainin'. Good, it were. Real honest; real friendly. Nearest I been to friendship. . . . Picked up them two pals at Yardley. Nothin' very special, wasn't Yardley, save for them. Not harder nor I'd known, afore. Mysterious like, on and off, when you peered into wot's comin', at night; France, trenches, guns, bein' killed. But even them visions, not dreadful. Over the top, 'atin' it, yet pal with pal. Fer the sake of somethin', you didn't know wot, but oh! *somethin'!* doin' somethin' at last, somethin' real, somethin' with no riddle to it. Do your duty, an' if you cops it, you cops it. An' then France. All the places, an' the little woods, an' the grey mud, an' the naked stumps o' trees; an' the towns be'ind, an' the drunks an' the red lamps an' all; sure, *all* of it! 'Uman nature in the raw; lookin' at itself and its memories and 'opes from over the world's edge. Oo! The edge o' the world, and us over it."

"It's grass again, Frank. Grass and flowers, and the lines just visible, and the holes all but filled. And silence and sunlight, and birds. . . ."

"There was birds then," he said, reflecting; "but that was cruel. Crueller than the gunfire. Mad, they sounded."

" D'you know what I feel ?" I said. " It was so much more real *then*—so much *more* of reality was pumped into those places, than there is now, that what you see now isn't what's really there. It's all there, *now*, the terrific human emotions pumped into that soil—the frightful human experiences gone through there, and so incomparably beyond anything else that ever happens there or has or will happen, that when one goes back there, one has no right to be conscious of anything else."

He smiled whimsically.

" There's not many that'd want to be there twice, for all that," he said. " Save in the way I goes."

" I think we go almost in the same way. I thought I'd never reconcile myself to not being there while it was going on; but there was a lot of curiosity and selfishness in that. . . ."

" And you'd not 'ave met me," he broke in.

" No. And I can honestly feel myself in communion with it. The not having sights and sounds doesn't really matter. The spirit is there, spirit good and bad, but, whatever they say, good inside the bad, in the cursing and hating and madness. And nothing interferes with the communion of spirit with that spirit. And there was *more* there, to be in communion with, than ever anywhere, perhaps."

" An' I goes round and round through them old places," he continued, " an' I remembers this and that, an' I *am* there, and more there nor I was, and in the souls of 'em I am, of me two pals, of me mates, me fellow corporals, me officers, that was goin' through things they've forgotten, things wot they never understood; but doin' things inside, bein' things, as never they guessed, nor will do, till they wakes up an' sees 'ow Christ was along with 'em, even in all that, even in the 'orrors, an' the beastliness. Blood from 'ead to foot, 'E were, an' mud; but with 'eaven in 'is eyes, like as 'E is now. An' don't you call that no mere mush. If that ain't true, nothin' ain't. When'll I make my Communion ?"

There was little left to teach him; nothing to prevent his Communion, and little time for anything.

So I received him into the Holy Catholic Church, absolved him from the past, and gave him the bread of immortality.

* * * * *

From this time on, he lived from Communion to Communion, and received Our Lord daily. At last, I told him I'd spend the next night with him, leaving him only to say my Mass and to bring back the Blessed Sacrament. The night was calm; we said the whole

Rosary, and recalled a strange mingling of his life in hospital and of the life of Jesus. Then he slept. He was still sleeping when I prepared to go to say my Mass. I woke him, to the scandal of the warder, who had wished him to sleep as long as possible. But I knew he would want to keep watch on Christ's Calvary, as Christ, now for so many days, had kept him company on his own.

I had already heard his confession during the night. He made it general once more, and offered the mixed chalice of his life to God, that He might transubstantiate it into a blood fit for the associated Sacrifice.

When I came back he made acts of Faith, Hope, and Charity. "Oh, my God, I believe. . . ."

Illusions faded, falsehood fallen away. Reality gazing upon him, the substance of things hitherto invisible. The man who had willed to have none of that, who had so obstinately denied, welcomed the truth now and went to it.

Oh, my God, I believe.

And oh, my God, I hope . . . all that is in me of ignorance asking to be taught; of emptiness, waiting to be filled; of loneliness, asking for its friends; all of it, all of me, hopes for what now I all but grasp; what has come, now, so very near; what needs no struggle, now, from my exhaustion, to lay hold on. I hope . . .

And oh, my God, I love! I love with all my heart; my heart that couldn't find, couldn't know, once, what to love, couldn't tell save that it wanted to love, and poured its love out onto the mocking idol, the distorted symbol of Thyself. For Thee always, underneath the image, my heart meant to love, pitifully betrayed by the very symbol that so earnestly offered Thee to me. But now, the image is done with; finished, the symbol; and my heart can say it loves Thee. . . .

So, oh my God, I love.

Corpus Domini Nostri Jesu Christi . . . The Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ . . .

A body, weak and broken as my own was, and is to be, what can that do for me? *My* body, so misused, so offered in the sacrifice of sin, can that be helped? Well, You, too, have a body; You, too, are a man; You came all the way down . . . You *know*. . . . I come to You, I, still able to offer You my body, not fearing to; You understand. You take it. And now that I have finished with it, I leave it and its history alone; I don't attend to it. But my soul, Jesus; my mind that still has its horrible hour before it passes

into the life that no one can tamper with . . . Will you help *that ?*

Custodiat animam tuam :

I will mount sentinel, O soul, above you. I will mount guard. And I will guard you, not from outside you. Not from far off. I am within you; I am soul's soul for you. I am Life; I am *your* life. You can never die.

In vitam æternam : Unto eternal life.

Amen.

* * * * *

Many Masses were said for him that day, else it would have been intolerable not to offer the prevailing Sacrifice forthwith, in those very walls. But on the next day the Catholics were allowed to attend the Requiem in their chapel, a dingy chapel, with mean walls washed pale colours, stencilled with monograms, and harshly lit. Two poor statues stood there; the Sacred Heart and Mary; and over the Altar, Christ hung between two thieves.

But the better for that poverty, the tremendous Mystery revealed itself, undisguised by anything not itself, offered to souls undistracted by any rival claim.

I knew how they knelt there, men tired at daybreak, heads thrown back, eyes closed, lips parted, forgetting for a moment the unceasing watch, the imminent necessity, the relentless round; or, with eyes held fixed by the twin tapers; or, with head huddled down on folded arms, shoulders bowed with the huge weight life had laid on them.

Here, too, what the sight offered became unsubstantial and thin; all this world's lights went out; across the lattice of its illusions looked forth the grave eyes of God whom even now, perhaps, they didn't understand, whom even now their will was weak for loving; the manner of whose service, they could not now foresee. But faith flickered there timid, yet unextinguished, in the winds of their thought, in the mist of their dreams; hope lifted up hands faint from the long effort to close on nothingness; love, too, was there, a certain warmth; a peace.

But already, at the Altar's foot, the priest stood, and bowed himself straightway with the worshippers, shouldering his sins; heaving on to his shoulders all their sins. He beat his breast.

Confiteor : Lord, I confess ! By my fault; my great, great fault. He drew it all to him, all the whole world's sin, for there is but one Altar and one Mass in all the world, and into it all the world is gathered.

Gathered there, then, were all those friends, the unforgetting friends, warned of that hour of sacrifice, and kneeling at Altar-stairs that mounted, in reality, towards this self-same Mass, this huge Mass that outstripped time and space; hither, unguessing it, rolled the effort and the anguish of the great city so near by, of England, of the world, and of the hidden world that sent souls flocking round the universal offering.

The priest mounted the steps, and read the Introit. *Requiem, Domine ;* Rest, Lord, we ask for these tired folks; *Requiem dona ;* the free gift of rest—we cannot earn it ! *Requiem æternam ;* eternal rest; for this brief respite will not do for them. Their work re-begins, work so futile, toil how vain ! *Te decet hymnus, Deus, in Sion.* Song were befitting thee, Lord, in Thy Holy Heaven; but these souls are too tired, perhaps, to sing; they prefer to ask Thy mercy, *eleison ;* and again and again, they ask it, *eleison ! Christe, Kyrie, eleison !*

The priest lifts praying hands, and from all the flocking souls, one name is singled out: Thy servant Francis; out of all the centuries, all the flocking millions, one name is called. O Creator! O Redeemer! Thy servant Francis. . . . For all these souls, still toiling; for all those souls out there, whose work is over, who have no more work, nor sin, but in whom the wounds of work and sin still call Thy healing; but for him, too, most of all to-day, Thy servant Francis, for whom the day we all have to expect is come. . . . This is his day, *dies illa.* . . . That day, for him, is to-day, and was it all of wrath ? His book has been brought forth, his whole life read through to Thee; his whole life, all of it, and therefore, O Just Judge, surely how much of good, of innocence, of joyousness, of kindness, and of loneliness —how much that may be argued ! Yet not he, nor I, will argue; not I assess—*O quid dicturus ?* Not I can judge; I am not Judge. King of appalling Majesty, Salvation is Thy gift, *Thy* gift. Not we put mercy into Thee; Thou art its Fountain; from Thee flows forth Salvation; from Thee, the Saviour; from Thee, Jesus. *You* speak, Jesus ! remember on his behalf what we don't even know; remember on my behalf what even I, your servant Francis, shutting my eyes to all else, *do* know—*recordare !* That You travelled far to seek me; You, too, were tired; You came, You didn't hesitate; You came into the horrible room; You came and You sat beside me on the stairs; You sat on my bed; You kept with me . . . You had Your gallows, too. *Tantus labor ! O tantum atque talem Redemptorem !* It can't have all been wasted. Magdalen You absolved; to the thief You

promised Paradise; and to me, You gave hope . . . better than hope; You gave yourself; You were my friend; already, it was enough.

And in the Gospel, Jesus Himself spoke, reassuring the soul unable to believe in its own comradeship. Yes, I have come. Yes, I am here. It's no dream, it's no mere promise, even. I am Resurrection. I am *Life ;* you possess me, my Real Presence, and though you be dead, you live.

And the Priest offers the Bread and Wine, one Bread of many grains, one cup of mingled drops, the water of our weak humanity deluged in God's strong wine, eternal life from the immortal vine, Life deluging our dying; and of His Divinity we are made partakers, who in our Humanity did not disdain to share.

The bell, cool drops upon fevered souls, announcing that the Thrice Holy, the Infinite and Ineffable, must also by us be named thrice blessed, since He has come so near as to stand, see, at our very doors; Himself, no more now theme of hymn or scripture, nor yet a memory, however precious, of a distant Palestine recalled across slow centuries, but at our doors, our own doors, these prison doors. Not they can keep Him out; the barriers fall. And again, the eager bell; and again, and He is here. You are here, You are lifted up; we see You; you are lifted, and are drawing all men, all of us, to Yourself. Jesus Christ, between earth and heaven, as he saw You himself, both earth and heaven; making the two, one; in Yourself, making them one, and in Yourself, ourselves. Stooping, ascending, coming down, all the way down, down to Your servant Francis; and lifting him up, and us, since You, too, are lifted back. You have ascended to the God whom we, as You do, we, priest and people, brothers and sisters of Yourself, now name Our Father.

Pater Noster.

God's Lamb ! What did You do with sin, when You took it away ? You took it on Yourself, into Yourself, and it died. You died of it Yourself, and we have to die of it; and yet it wasn't death, since death itself couldn't kill You, who are Life; and we share Your life and have died to no more than death. Finished, our struggle; over, the restlessness; give us Your peace, eternal rest in You.

For not alone in His arms are we embraced; with Him we are incorporate; our effort, the long ache and strain of the whole world's history mount up into this enormous act of Mass, the adequate petition, the superabundant expiation, the sufficing Eucharist, the full worship, on the part of creation, of its God. Our peace, then,

is powerful; our rest, energy; we sleep, but we wake; we are in Him, and He in God, and They in us.

We cannot but falter, Lord. We are not worthy. *Domine, Domine, Domine ; non sum dignus.* But who so needy, Lord, just because so unworthy! We have proved, assuredly, our need; we, all of us, who kneel still at these steps; the friends who have tried to serve Thy servant Francis for Thy sake; Thy Barbara; Thy Sergeant, and the girl who with his service has loved to join her own; the two lads, who learned to be Thy heroes; the boy, who in the whirl of all that is not Thou, still worships Thee. And these who kneel here at Thy Communion rails, sinners, but absolved, yet needing Thee for the years when Man's help, alas, shall succour them how little; and Thy Church and Thy world, and Thine unseen flocking souls still in their Purgatory, and with them, perchance, Thy servant Francis. . . . O Word of God, utter Thyself in the souls of all of us, that our lives be healed.

We bow, and we, too, are lifted; Your arms lift us; to Your heart you lift us; You hold us there; You stoop; we raise our faces, Lord; and lo, Your Eyes upon our eyes; and upon our lips, Your kiss.

So that in us no trace of sin remain, whom Thy pure and holy Sacrament has made Thy new Creation.

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